

NATIONAL FOSSIL DAY



By Jeff J. Person

“Show me your teeth, and I’ll tell you who you are.”
Georges Cuvier (father of vertebrate paleontology)

October 12, 2011 was the second annual National Fossil Day, a coordinated event where local museums, universities, and state & federal agencies across the country focus on celebrating and promoting the stewardship of our fossil resources. As part of National Fossil Day, the public was invited to the Heritage Center to celebrate North Dakota’s prehistoric past. Participants were transported back in time to when *Tyrannosaurus rex* roamed North Dakota and giant sea monsters swam North Dakota seas, and to when mastodons and mammoths trumpeted across the plains.



The North Dakota Geological Survey (NDGS) was a proud partner of the event and encouraged anyone with an unidentified fossil to bring it into the Heritage Center for identification. NDGS paleontologists Becky Barnes and Jeff Person were on-hand to identify fossils for the public, and NDGS geologist Timothy Nesheim was available to help identify rocks. The exhibits in the Heritage Center also helped attendees “flesh out” the particular fossils they brought in. Archaeologists with the North Dakota State Historical Society were available for those who brought along archaeological artifacts.

The event was well received by those in attendance. More than 200 visitors with all manner of fossils and rocks showed up to have their treasures identified. Participants ranged from toddlers to grandparents and came from all over the state. Some even traveled from as far as Dickinson just for the event.



On October 21, 2011, John W. Hoganson was presented the 2011 Arthur Gray Leonard Award by the Department of Geology and Geological Engineering at the University of North Dakota. The award presented by Joseph Hartman (Chair, UND Dept. of Geology & Geological Engineering) is given to alumni that excel in the fields of geoscience and geological engineering. John’s award citation read in part:

John has been employed with the North Dakota Geological Survey since 1981. John’s duties include Supervisor of the state’s Paleontology Program, Curator of the North Dakota State Fossil Collection, Director of the NDGS Fossil Resource Management Program, and Director of the NDGS Public Outreach Program. John built the paleontology program for the State of North Dakota from scratch to a nationally recognized program. In 1991, he established a cooperative relationship between the NDGS and the State Historical Society of North Dakota housing the NDGS paleontology program in the State Museum. He has designed and implemented more than two dozen fossil exhibits that are displayed in museums and visitor centers across North Dakota. The interest and excitement that visitors to the North Dakota Heritage Center have expressed for the paleontology exhibits played a significant role in public and corporate support for an expanded Heritage Center and is why one of the four new galleries will be devoted to geology. A considerable amount of John’s time has been directed to public outreach. He has given many, many fossil tours and presentations to public service groups and the general public across the state. Along those lines, John initiated and now supervises a public fossil dig program in North Dakota that has grown to four digs per year and attracts participants from all over the country. John has authored numerous papers on the stratigraphy and paleontology of the Niobrara, Pierre, Fox Hills, Hell Creek, Fort Union, Golden Valley, White River, and Arikaree strata, as well as the Coleharbor Group.



Joseph Hartman (left) presents the Leonard Medal to John Hoganson.