



Reflections of the Past, Visions for the Future

Over 90 years of discovery with the Paleontological Research Institution

So long as the beauty and philosophy of the development of life on earth intrigues the human mind, facilities for their study will be demanded.

PRI founder Gilbert Harris, 1950

Letter from the Director

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, for PRI 2023 was the best of times and the worst of times.

Programmatically, over the past year PRI was more successful than ever. Our specimen collections rank among the largest and best paleontology collections in the nation, and have been almost continuously supported by grants from the National Science Foundation for a quarter century. Our online educational resources are accessed by more than 1 million people a year. Our Museum of the Earth celebrated its 20th anniversary this year and continues to serve as major tourist attraction and educational destination for diverse audiences. Summer camp at our Cayuga Nature Center was once again sold out and highly praised by campers and their families. Our Paleozoic Pals plush toy line is extraordinarily popular with fossil lovers of all ages.

But at the same time as all these accomplishments, major funds pledged to us by our largest donors have failed to arrive, and as the year ends PRI has been forced to implement staff

layoffs and other expense reductions. We are working hard to minimize the effect of these reductions, which we hope are temporary, on our audiences.

PRI has weathered financial challenges before. The Institution was founded by a small determined group of people at the depths of the Great Depression, and for 60 years survived on small donations and a few large bequests from former students of the founder. We will survive this challenge as well, with the support of individuals who value and believe in what we do—in science, education, publication, research, conservation, and much more; who believe that understanding the history of the Earth and its life broadens human understanding of our place in nature and the meaning of our lives; who believe that in looking backward we also look forward.



Warren Allmon, Director of PRI

PRI by the numbers

120,000

People participated in PRI's public programming since 2003

10,000

Students have participated in the Kids Discover the Trail! programs since 2003

1,200,000

People served online through PRI's websites each year

60,000

Teachers have received PRI's Teacher-Friendly Guide to Climate Change

6,000,000+

Students reached nationally across the United States in all 50 states

235%

Increase in usage of PRI's Earth@Home sites in the past 12 months

7,000,000+

Specimens from all seven continents in PRI's collection, making it one of the 10 largest invertebrate fossil collections in the United States

500+

Specimen donations between 2003 and 2023, including more than 2 million individual specimens

51,000

Paleozoic Pals sold since 2015, with \$241,000 pledged to our Paleozoic Pals Kickstarter campaigns

PRI's journey through time



1932

Founding of the Paleontological Research Institution by Gilbert D. Harris.



1952

Katherine Palmer became Director of PRI. She was the first woman to receive the Paleontological Society Medal.



1992

Warren Allmon became PRI's fourth Director. He greatly expanded PRI's educational outreach, obtained funds for collections care, and rebuilt connections with Cornell.



1999

The Hyde Park Mastodon was found in Dutchess County, NY. It was excavated by PRI staff and volunteers in 2000 and has been on display at the Museum of the Earth since 2003.



2000

PRI acquired a 44-ft Right Whale skeleton. The whale died after getting caught in fishing gear in NJ.



2003

Museum of the Earth opened to the public in September to provide opportunities to explore our world through a mix of natural history displays, interactive science features and art exhibitions.



2013

Cayuga Nature Center became PRI's newest public venue for education.



2015

PRI launched its Paleozoic Pals collection and has sold over 51,000 individual plushies.

2020

Earth@Home was created as a free interactive website about Earth and its life, with a focus on geology, paleontology, climate, and the connections of Earth's different systems.

2023

Bulletins of American Paleontology published its 408th number. Founded by Gilbert Harris in 1895, it is the oldest continuously published paleontological journal in the Western Hemisphere.



90th Anniversary Celebrations



PALEONTOLOGICAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTION
EST. 1932

In July 2022, PRI launched its Celebrate 90 campaign, an effort to acknowledge the 90th anniversary of the Institution and other important anniversary milestones from 2022-2023, as well as the return of annual PRI events that have been on hiatus due to the pandemic.

The 18 month-long celebration included new public events, exhibits and projects, as well as the return of annual PRI events that had been on hiatus due to the pandemic. The celebration kicked off with the long-awaited reopening of the Cayuga Nature Center Lodge on June 18, 2022.

Anniversary Celebrations in 2023-2024

- 90th Anniversary** of PRI
- 30th Anniversary** of Warren Allmon, Director, joining PRI staff
- 20th Anniversary** of the opening of the Museum of the Earth
- 25th Anniversary** of Rob Ross, Director for Outreach joining PRI staff
- 10th Anniversary** of Nature Center joining PRI



Museum of the Earth

20th Anniversary

Sept 27, 2023 was the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Museum of the Earth. The Museum has served more than **600,000 people** over the past two decades and continues its mission to educate people about the history of the Earth and its life. To celebrate the 20th anniversary, PRI hosted a community celebration in September 2023 that included free admission, special activities and cupcakes.

Exhibits

On March 13, 2023 we opened our temporary exhibit on the Devonian paleontology and geology of New York State, *NY Rocks! Ancient Life of the Empire State*. This exhibit offers an opportunity for the public to learn about New York's rich fossil record from the Devonian Period and the Paleontological Research Institution's expansive collection.

The exhibit was developed in collaboration with the New York State Museum and with financial support from Tompkins Community Bank and the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

NY Rocks! Ancient Life of the Empire State introduces visitors to the ancient world and life of the Devonian Period, and show how the Earth of 385 million years ago continues to impact our world today. Visitors learn more about how Devonian rocks have been used for building stone, how Devonian bedrock affects wine production in the Finger Lakes, and how regional tourism relates to Earth history events. In addition, the exhibit introduces some of the people who have studied the Devonian of New York and how large, "behind the scenes" museum collections are used to make sense of the Earth's history.



Cayuga Nature Center



10th Anniversary

2023 marked the 10-year anniversary of the merger with the Cayuga Nature Center. We celebrated this milestone in July with a Summer Celebration at the Nature Center that included many activities including climate change education table, animal education programs and guided hikes.

We also had a special ice cream flavor created by Cornell's Food Science department to create awareness of our planned Layers of Life exhibit. There was a Neapolitan style ice-cream with "flavorless," truffle/mushroom, and beet flavors to represent the layers of life in the forest and the impact of climate change on our resources.

Camp

In summer 2023, Cayuga Nature Center held another successful summer of Summer Camp with **675 campers!** At summer camp this year, children learned about climate change and energy through fun, hands-on activities such as building a wind-powered machine, being temperature detectives, and testing flood scenarios and solutions with real water in a miniature landscape. These programs are funded by the Park Foundation.

We also provided **62 weeks of free camp** through our Young Naturalist Access Program (YNAP). Staff and Campers had an exciting summer doing climate, weather, and energy experiments and exploring together in nature across our 100 acres!



Collections

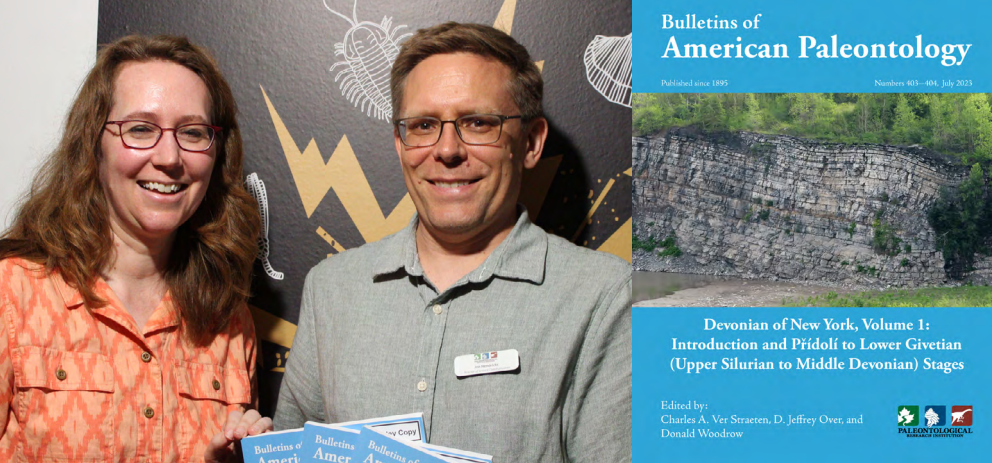
We concluded a 4-year project supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to database and reorganize the historic former Cornell University modern mollusk shell collection.

PRI Collections staff databased just over **21,000 groups of specimens**, including almost **77,000 individual specimens** from more than **2,500 localities**.

The Cornell specimens were then physically integrated with the rest of the collection. The resulting reorganization for the first time revealed that PRI's modern mollusk collection contains between **400,000–500,000 specimens**.

Funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) is providing funding to support integrating the historic collections of Devonian fossils from New York State recently donated by Drs. Gordan Baird and Carlton Brett.





Science Communication

Bulletins of American Paleontology

During the past year, PRI published four new issues of *Bulletins of American Paleontology* including “Systematics and Phylogeny of Plio-Pleistocene species of Turritellidae (Gastropoda) from Florida and the Atlantic Coastal Plain” (No. 402) and Devonian of New York, Vols. 1-3 (No. 403-408) in July 2023.

The “Devonian of New York” issues are part of a 1,000 page, three-volume set that spans three subscription years. This publication produced a new synthesis of the Devonian rocks of New York State. It is the **second largest single publication** project ever undertaken by PRI—the largest since 1965-66.

More information on this can be found at:
priweb.org/devonian-ny/

Earth@Home

A grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) supported continued development of the Here on Earth component of Earth@Home, earthathome.org.

Here on Earth consists of a series of 8 regional guides to the Earth science of the U.S. Most of the content is derived from PRI’s Teacher-Friendly Guides to Earth Science series; but almost all of the images have been updated. PRI concluded work on the initial content development for this portion of the Earth@Home website in October. PRI’s online resources were accessed by **over 1.2 million visitors this year**.



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