

UO professor researches Earth's greenhouse gasses

From fossils to coral reefs, our planet gives clues to how "greenhouses" affect fauna and floral life

BY EVA SYLWESTER
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

A University professor of geological sciences is researching past occurrences of global warming to better understand the global warming taking place today.

Greg Retallack's research, presented at the Geological Society of America's annual conference in October, sprung from the common knowledge among geologists that there are certain places in the world where fossils are generally better preserved than others.

These "fossil bonanzas" are found in areas where there is a low oxygen content, because organisms that scavenge upon and

promote the decay of dead animals require oxygen to survive.

Retallack discovered that fossils from certain time periods are more well preserved than others.

After compiling data on the ages of these well-preserved fossils, Retallack found that during the past 500 million years, there have been 41 periods where fossil preservation was exceptionally good.

Oxygen levels were low throughout the world during these periods.

Retallack said high levels of methane gas, introduced into the atmosphere either by igneous intrusion or the destabilization of deep sea sediments, were present in the atmosphere during these periods. When

methane interacts with oxygen in the air, carbon dioxide forms.

Retallack said these periods of global warming contribute to the overall stability of the planet. When too much carbon is present in the air, it can change the oxygen that most animals need to breathe into carbon dioxide. Fossils, composed primarily of carbon, keep excess carbon underground.

While some species become extinct during periods of global warming, many species survive these periods, which is why there is still life on earth today, Retallack said.

However, global warming can cause difficulties for those experiencing it.

"Greenhouses can have a serious side," Retallack said. "We have a record of greenhouses that have

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IN BRIEF

Students reveal work at jewelry sale today

Twenty-two students in the Jewelry and Metalsmithing Program at the University will be selling original pieces of jewelry that they created for the 11th annual Cheap Jewelry Sale today in the lobby of Lawrence Hall.

The sale goes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. but in the past, a lot of items have sold out during the first couple of hours, said Visiting Assistant Professor and sale organizer Anya Kivarkis.

According to a press release, students were instructed to create jewelry with an exciting twist, and some of the pieces are "outrageous in design."

Each student was responsible for 20 to 40 pieces, made from traditional materials like silver and non-traditional materials like plastic, felt and rubber.

Kivarkis said all of the contributing students have worked rigorously in a collaborative effort to bring together a unique collection of jewelry using both intermediate and advanced techniques.

Prices will range from \$5 to \$15

and money made during the sale will go to reimburse students for materials and to guest lectures and studio equipment.

— Emily Smith

Former Mafia getaway driver speaks tonight

The University will host a free public lecture by former Mafia getaway driver Georgia Durante at 7:30 p.m. in 180 PLC tonight titled "The Company She Keeps: One Woman's Journey Through the Dark Side."

Durante worked as a model and stunt driver and started a stunt car company called Performance Two.

Her lecture, based on her book, "The Company She Keeps," will cover her experiences in the Mafia with sexual abuse and violence and her spiritual journey toward self-understanding, according to a University press release. The lecture is sponsored by Evelyn Nelson and Robert Wulf and the Wulf Professorship in Humanities with support from the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics and several other University departments and programs.

— Nicholas Wilbur

Drugs: Study strives to yield standard procedures

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For the first two years, the study will focus on Lane County, with Jackson County examined the third year. Squires said she hopes HHS will extend the grant so the study can be conducted on a national scale, but she added that results would have country-wide implications.

The COE specializes in research on early childhood development and assessment. It developed the Ages and Stages Questionnaire that allows parents of young children to evaluate their child at home, using questions such as "If you hand your child a toy, does she wave it around?" The questionnaire is now used around the world.

Squires said this project is particularly important here in Oregon, where more people per capita are in rehabilitation for methamphetamine use than anywhere else in the country, according to an Oct. 3, 2004 Oregonian article. Meth use by parents has swamped child protection agencies; Squires said meth was a factor in 71 percent of cases of kids placed in foster care.

Although the drug is acknowledged as a huge problem, very little is known about the impacts of prenatal meth use on children, she said.

"There tends to be a lot of very early irritability, crying — that sort of thing," she said. "But about cognitive or thinking skills, we don't really know yet."

The COE will partner with the Relief Nursery; the Early Childhood Coordination Agency for Referrals, Evaluations and Services; and the Childhood Development and Rehabilitation Center.

Judy Newman, co-director of EC CARES, said the study will be an important step in having a standard procedure for evaluating children early and figuring out which children need services most.

"We would like to do the best possible job of identifying kids that need our services," Newman said. "We want to make sure we can reach out to those kids to get the best possible outcome because we believe the sooner, the better."

EC CARES is an early childhood special education program that serves children with special needs from birth to age 5.

Participation in the study will be voluntary, but Squires feels many women will cooperate.

"Sometimes having a baby is really a life-changing event, and if they've been trying to get off drugs, seeing that there's another person to be responsible for can be enough to motivate them — get them into treatment — to try to change things in their lives that need to be changed," Squires said.

Contact the higher education reporter at kbrown@dailyemerald.com

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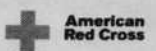
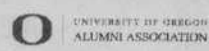
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