

VERTEBRATE PALEONTOLOGY IN
JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING

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The 1974 field season at the station was shorter than planned this year due to the high level of Pilgrim Creek making accessibility to the outcrops impossible. Following recession of the water, return to the locality was somewhat disappointing in that the area which produced the most fossils in the past had been eroded away so that only a small portion remained for sampling. Attention was focused on other areas of the outcrop and a new "producing" area was found. While fossils were found on the surface here, they were not as common as before.

Several new additions made their appearance this year. Most notable among these were a rhinoceros tooth and a medium-sized carnivore, Hesperocyon. Rhino had been suspected in the past from very fragmentary pieces of enamel, but until now no firm evidence was found. The Hesperocyon material was also expected but not found on previous occasions. Hesperocyon is common in many other Oligocene deposits in North America and represents the fox sized carnivore group.

New small mammals were also found in the past year. A single molar of Pipestoneomys was recovered from these Oligocene deposits. This genus has uncertain familial assignment and has been questionably assigned to the family Castoridae primarily on the basis of superficial resemblance. Other new rodents to the fauna include a large eomyid, Yoderimys, and a small heteromyid, Heliscomys. Heliscomys is very close to the ancestral stock for the modern families Heteromyidae (pocket mice) and Geomyidae (gophers). Specimens of Heliscomys from the middle Oligocene are quite common but specimens from the early Oligocene (Pilgrim Creek equivalent) are quite rare. The specimen recovered is a fine maxillary fragment with three teeth.

Other activities included a prospecting foray further upstream into deposits which have been radiometrically dated as Eocene (J. D. Love, personal communication). While good fossil remains were wanting, some small pieces of bone were found. If a good fauna could be produced from these Eocene beds it might help to shed some light on the unusual nature of the early Oligocene beds which we have been working.