Spring is a busy time at UA's herbarium

FAIRBANKS–It is difficult to imagine with snow still on the ground, but in a few weeks the hillsides and bogs of Alaska will be springing to life with hundreds of plants and an astronomical number of fungi, lichens and mosses.

The melting snow signals the busiest time of the year for Dr. David Murray, Curator of the largest collection of plants in Alaska. He is responsible for the herbarium section of the University of Alaska Museum.

Although the displays in the main museum attract the most visitors and are the only parts of the collection known to most residents, Murray said an analogy of the displays to a tip of an iceberg is a good one. His department holds nearly 70,000 plant specimens in gray cabinets located in the Chapman Building.

A new visitor to an herbarium might expect a greenhouse-like structure filled with hanging pots and perhaps some pressed flowers. Only a scientist-researcher or a very serious amateur would be immediately impressed by the UA collection in its present form.

Murray explains the herbarium is not a browsing exhibit, but a place to come for information. "It's a library in a sense." Because of the frangile nature of the specimens, visits by the public are supervised by Murray or someone on the staff. However, he said such visits are welcomed.

The most active use of the collection is made by visiting scientists, faculty and students. But Murray said he receives many inquiries from the public concerning medicinal or culinary properties of plants. His department is also often asked to do plant identification.

"Traditionally, the price of an identification is a specimen, "Murray said. This has been one source of enlarging the collection which began back in the 1950s. Students and professors in agriculture and biology began the collection and it gained momentum as the biology sections of the university grew.

"By the mid '50s it was active and well constituted," he said. The department continues to generate specimens for the herbarium as students and faculty strive to document what plants are here and where else they occur.

In recent years, field work has been concentrated in the Arctic Wildlife Range, the Arctic Coastal Plain and the Brooks Range countries which have plant-life related to that found in Alaska. One for one exchanges are made with Canada, the Soviet Union, Scandinavia, Finland and others. The specimens exchanged are from arctic, subarctic and Pacific coastal regions.

He estimates the herbarium receives a thousand or more specimens each year through the exchange.

Gifts of collections are another source of enlarging the exhibit. Murrasaid the department recently received a rather spectacular gift of a collection from the upper Kuskokwim region. Plants from this and the lower Kuskokwim are lacking.

Murray said, "There are large gaps" in collection and knowledge of plants in several areas of Alaska. He cited the Aleutians as another area where morework and collecting should be done. "It's such a cast land," he added.

For those who find adventure in exploring the unknown plant world, Murray said Alaska is "still very much in the exploratory stages. We know the least about the most inconspicuous." He said his wife recently discovered a new moss genus in the Brooks Range. It is entirely new to science.

Murray would like to locate the amateur botanists in this area. He said they could help add to the UA herbarium as well as supply specimen requests from other countries. The department hasn't the budget to travel all of Alaska to fulfill this obligation.

The collection process isn't complicated. Murray said scientists anothers take specimens then squash them in a plant press and dry them, by heat or air, quickly. They are then folded in newsprint with the appropriate information about the collection spot.

Specimens meeting certain criteria are accepted for the herbarium and are mounted on herbarium paper and stored.

Murray said persons interested in making a collection needn't travel to Alaska's remote corners to make a significant find. He said, "Botonists have ignored this area. They assume Fairbanks is known." Murray said further, "We know more about the distribution of the plants in the Arctic Coastal Plain than Fairbanks."

Unlike some other states, Alaska has few restrictions on collecting wild plants. He said it is also possible to collect plants without killing them. With a little attention to soil PH and sunlight, the wild flowers may be successfully transplanted.

Alaskans have an expanse of wild territory to explore but they have only a few short months of activity. Murray said collecting usually starts at Eagle Summit in June then proceeds to the Arctic Coastal Plain areas in July and August.

When winter returns, collectors can classify their specimens with the help of several books available. And they may find the herbarium in the UA Chapman Building an invaluable library of plant life.

Binocular Prospect reached

Recently, a two-man team from Geneva-Pacific Corp., Evanston, Ill. geologically sampled the long-time studied but seldom-reached "Binocular Prospect" in the southern flank of the Wrangell Mountains, 250 miles east of Anchorage and 15 miles south of McCarthy, Alaska.

Using a helicopter to reach the site in the Wrangell's McCarthy Quadrangle, the men were able to take approximately 200 pounds of channel samples in less than two hours from a location once considered inaccessible.

Modern methods have opened up the hard-to-reach areas of Alaska and given geologists and prospectors new frontiers to explore.

Technological advances have aided in the work of discovering what lies behind the copper stains of the Binocular Prospect.

Assays from the channel samples, although considered minimum values due to their strongly-weathered conditions, showed three samples to be more than 20% copper and several to be in the five to 12% range.

One sample had a 29.45% copper content. Accompanying silver values up to 1.5 ounces of silver per ton were also present.

Until recently, the high and rugged inaccessibility of the area had limited geological studies to long-range photography and binocular viewing – thus, its name, the Binocular Prospect.

Martin Radovan, an early prospector in the area, reached the mineral prospect in the summer of 1929.

Radovan and his wife spent several months just carving a route in the sheer face of the mountain. The rest of the summer was spent collecting samples in the stained area which indicated potential copper mineralization.

Alaska has entered a new age where out-of-the-way areas can be reached more easily for mineral explorations.

Even road access to the Geneva-Pacific Corp. claims has been improved, enabling the company to truck operating equipment and supplies to its base camp. The State of Alaska is working on maintenance on roads and bridges in the region.

Geneva-Pacific has constructed 11.5 miles of basic roads in its claim area.

Geneva-Pacific Corp., a mineral exploration company, is equally owned by Belden Corporation, Geneva, Ill., and Cenco Inc., Chicago, Ill.

Kleppe announces use of steel shot for water fowl hunting

Steel shot ammunition will be used for waterfowl hunting on selected areas in the Atlantic Flyway starting in 1976 Secretary of the Interior Thomas S. Kleppe announced recently.

The use of steel or other non-toxic shot will be extended to selected areas in the Mississippi Flyway in 1977, and the Central and Pacific Flyways in 1978.

Areas where steel shot must be used will be identified jointly by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the state fish and game departments. Primary attention will be focused on known problem areas.

The purpose of the steel shot requirement is to stop the accumulation of spent lead pellets in areas where they cause lead poisoning problems.

Waterfowl frequently ingest these pellets and subsequently die from lead poisoning. While steel shot is the only available substitute for lead at the present time, other types of shot are being investigated and may be available in the future.

The use of steel shot will apply only to the hunting of ducks, geese, swans, and coots because the hunting of these species is believed to be the source of most of the lead shot deposited in wetland areas, and causing lead poisoning.

The hunting of other species of aquatic and upland game birds does not appear to be a source of significant lead poisoning problems.

The decision to begin the implementation of the use of steel shot in the Atlantic Flyway is based upon the findings that the problem is most acute on the Atlantic seaboard.

The decision to implement the program progressively nationwide over three years is designed to allow time for ammunition manufacturers to develop production capabilities and for waterfowl managers to further identify lead poison problem areas.

ALFRED HAROLD WOODS–Recipient of the Jack Blake Memorial Trophy for sportsmanship admires the trophy that is permanently installed in the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce. Alfred also got the trophy that he is holding that he can keep.

–Photo by SUE GAMACHE

Woods wins sportsmanship award

By SUE GAMACHE

Alfred Harold Woods became the recipient of the Jack Blake Memorial trophy (sportsmanship award) and his signature was engraved on a permanent trophy that was placed in the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce building.

Alfred received the award because of his sportsmanship on the Junior North American Championship Sled Dog Races held in Fairbanks in March 1976. He was on his way home to place first for total elapsed time, when he lost his dogs and walked all the way to the finish line.

All the dog mushers in the three-dog class, five-dog class and the seven-dog class voted unanimously for Alfred to receive the award. In addition to the permanent trophy, Alfred is also holding a trophy which he can keep.

Alfred was born in Tanana, Alaska and is now attending Barnette Elementary School. He is 11 years old and in the fifth grade.

Alfred's father, Harold Woods, originally of Rampart, was a noted racer in the 1930-1940's. Alfred was racing Bud Fate's and Don Andon's, Jr. dogs this year.

Alfred is living with Dr. and Mrs. Fate. He is a well-known athlete in the Fairbanks area amongst his peers. He plays baseball, basketball and football. He also swims on the Arctic swim team.

GAMBELL NEWS

By GRACE SLWOOKO
Gambell Correspondent

Once upon a time there were a girl and her brother. And they looked alike. Sometimes the girl would tell her brother, "It's time that you should go find a wife for yourself." But the boy was bashful. He would rather stay alone.

But not the girl. She was not bashful. She was doing things more than her brother. She could run quite a ways without getting tired too soon. She was always out to run and was getting strong like a young man.

One time she asked her brother, "Would you like me to go and find you a girl for a wife?" When the boy was too bashful to answer, she said, "I'll go find you one."

So, the girl had her hair cut like man's haircut and dress like a man and went on a trip. She went to the village on foot. Now, she looked like her brother more.

She came to the village and the people there welcomed her with much hospitality. And they asked, what was the reason the young man was traveling that way. She said that she was coming to find a woman for a wife.

When she found one, she worked there for her parents for a few months. The young men of the village would do some competition with her, thinking her to be a young man. She would always beat them in races and wrestling.

The people of the village would sometimes get so suspicious of her. Some wonder if she really was a young man, or not.

But she went through her adventure nicely and then it was time for her to go back. Now getting a wife for her brother was done, so she was now returning home. Only thing was to come and get the girl on the next trip.

So upon arrival, she rushed in on her quiet brother and said, "You got a wife, you can just go get her. I did all the work for you to get her."

So the young man did as he was told by his ambitious sister. When he got there the girl was waiting, ready to go with him. He just took off and brought her home.

And what a laugh they had, when the girl found out at the home of the girl and her brother that they looked alike.

The hamburger was introduced into America in the 19th century by sailors from Hamburg, Germany.