

Sarah Rubin: Geology & Writing

Mentor: Dale Greenwalt -- Paleobiology (National Museum of Natural History)

Science Writing as Applied to Deep Time

This two-part internship through the Smithsonian Institution was a unique, one-in-a-lifetime experience that brought together every aspect of museum work from the research before the fieldwork to the publicizing of scientific articles. The two weeks of fieldwork, facilitated by Dr. Dale Greenwalt, near Glacier National Park integrated paleoecology with critical thinking when finding insects and fish in the Eocene's Kishenehn Formation. This formation is world-renowned for its spectacular preservation of these specimens, with many new species being found every year, and the discovery of all of the specimens brings to light questions such as what the conditions were to preserve the insects so well and what are the mineralogical differences in the layers containing insects and those containing fish. This same critical thinking transitioned into the second portion of the internship, which took place this past Spring break. At the Smithsonian, John Barrat, the lead science writer and creator of the Smithsonian's Insider website, oversaw the writing of articles to be published on the site museum's Facebook page that made scientific articles more accessible to the lay community. Articles ranging from Earth-based radar and cutting down on ivory smugglers, to new art techniques and aerial photography were the subjects for the translated articles, which required a mindset that allowed for filtering the original articles through the public's lens and condensing them appropriately. Both parts of the internship provided invaluable skills and experience that encourages critical thinking in scientific and creative ways, joining the two to create a complete museum experience.

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