

Monday, August 3, 2009 - Penn State Live

Wilf named Distinguished Speaker by Paleontological Society

Dr. Peter Wilf, associate professor of geosciences presenting talk.



University Park, Pa. -- Peter Wilf, associate professor of geosciences at Penn State, has been named Distinguished Speaker for fall 2009 through fall 2012 by the Paleontological Society.

The Paleontological Society selects outstanding scientists whose current research or other work in paleontology is highly regarded and of broad interest to serve as distinguished lecturers. The lecturers are excellent speakers who communicate the interest and importance of their work in paleontology well. The program is intended to make outstanding speakers available to the general public, to conduct workshops for teachers, or to speak in lecture series at colleges and universities.

Wilf is a paleobotanist with broad interests in the evolution of plants and terrestrial ecosystems including response to past climate change and extinction. He is interested in questions that test and provide deep-time context to modern observations of climate change, biodiversity, ecological processes and biogeography.

His work is based on field studies of the latest Cretaceous through the middle Eocene -- 66 to 45 million years ago -- fossil sites in Patagonia, Argentina and the western interior U.S. This time interval shaped the modern world and included the latest Cretaceous climate changes, the end-Cretaceous mass extinction and recovery, and global warming across the Paleocene-Eocene boundary. He also looks at modern insect herbivory, leaf shape-to-climate relationships and the decoding of leaf venation characters.

Wilf will lecture on three topics at any level from introductory to technical. His topics are "Ancient Biodiversity at the End of the World: Paleogene Floras of Patagonia Rediscovered," "Insect-Damaged Fossil Leaves Show How food Webs Respond to Ancient Climate Change and Extinction" and "Fossil Angiosperm Leaves: Paleobotany's Difficult Children Prove Themselves."