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## Nickelodeon and the Natural History Museum Of Los Angeles County Launch "Science Of Slime"

### New Video and Online Event Series Brings Together Nickelodeon Characters and NHM Scientists to Inspire Curiosity and Spotlight Slimy Specimens in Museum Collection

**LOS ANGELES, CA—November 17, 2020**—The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM) has partnered with Nickelodeon to explore the "**Science of Slime**" with experts and educators showcasing the many ways plants, animals, and other organisms use slime to survive. With the help of popular Nickelodeon characters and **Ryan Alessi** from Nick's *All That*, kids and families can get to know some of the world's slimiest species—from frogs to fish to snails—through **fun and educational videos, DIY activities**, and weekly **live programs** with NHM scientists at [NHM.org/slime](http://NHM.org/slime).

"We are always looking for innovative ways to showcase how fun scientific work and discovery can be, and to make our research and collections accessible and engaging for the widest possible audience," said Dr. Lori Bettison-Varga, President and Director of the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County. "We are grateful to Nickelodeon for this partnership and for inspiring young people to see some of their favorite programs and the world around them in a new light. With the videos, events, and activities, we hope to provide encouragement and tips for how to pursue careers in science and natural history and show what it's like to work at a science-focused museum."

The new custom Science of Slime webpage will feature kid-friendly information and allow online visitors to access Science of Slime content and downloadable activities in one place. All content will be available in **English and Spanish**. NHM's Gallery Interpreters and Scientists collaborated on a slime-inspired **virtual tour** that will take viewers on a journey **through NHM halls** and behind-the-scenes **into their collections**. Hosted by **Ryan Alessi** from Nickelodeon's *All That*, the video will offer a new perspective on the specimens on display at NHM and cared for in the collections, providing access to many items rarely seen by the public. **DIY Activities** developed by NHM's **2020 Marine Science Interns** will help audiences continue their at-home exploration with simple **step-by-step activities and projects** designed for family audiences that feature popular Nickelodeon characters from **SpongeBob Squarepants** and will be paired with fun, informational videos also created by the interns.

"NHMLAC is the ideal partner for a scientific exploration of Nickelodeon's slime and in helping to make science fun and accessible to kids," said Andrew Machles, Vice President of Public Affairs at Nickelodeon's parent company Viacom. "We have collaborated with the museum's experts to create content that we hope will inspire more kids to connect with nature and pursue an interest in scientific careers."

Nickelodeon **has produced six videos** featuring scientists from NHM's Research and Collections department, along with a virtual slime-related tour of the museum led by

Alessi. Edited with clips from Nickelodeon programs that add levity and help show the science reflected in Nick's approach to television, these videos will enable viewers to learn about each scientist's **role at the Museum**, what slimy **species they study**, and help them discover **mind-blowing facts** about the ways slime functions in nature. For example, a video with Regina Wetzler, PhD., Director, Marine Biodiversity Center and Dean Pentcheff, Project Coordinator, Diversity Initiative for the Southern California Ocean, will introduce viewers to a glass rope sponge in the Museum's collection that is a very distantly related cousin to SpongeBob, paired with snippets from SpongeBob that illustrate the scientists' fun facts about how some sponges make a skeleton by secreting glass. Viewers will also be introduced to the pet snake Audubon of Greg Pauly, Ph.D., Curator, Herpetology and the crocheted sea slugs of Jann Vendetti, Ph.D., Associate Curator, Malacology studies as these scientists show off key species found at the Museum.

Each **Monday** and **Thursday** through December 14 (except on Thanksgiving), NHM's Education team and Live Animal Program will host assembly-style webinars that enable students and teachers to participate from their virtual classroom. The sessions will allow participants to meet a scientist or a live animal and will allow them to **submit their own questions** to be answered.

### **Livestream Calendar**

Monday, November 9 from 10am - 10:30am

#### **Meet Bill Ludt: Fish facts and slime eels**

As NHM's Assistant Curator of Ichthyology since 2019, Dr. Bill Ludt aims to understand how evolution occurs within the largest and most diverse group of vertebrates – fishes! Explore some of the strange and spectacular species he has encountered in the Museum's collections and out in the wild, and learn how slime can play an important role in their underwater survival.

Thursday, November 12 from 11:30am - 12:00pm

#### **Live Animal Presentation: Invertebrates**

Join the Live Animal Care Team to learn about invertebrates!

Monday, November 16 from 1pm - 1:30pm

#### **Meet Lisa Gonzalez: Bug blood and bubble-blowing insects**

Step into the itty-bitty world of bugs with Lisa Gonzalez, Assistant Collections Manager of NHM's entomology department. Since 2012, she has helped oversee the Museum's collection of more than 6 million insects, spiders, and other terrestrial arthropod specimens from around the world while exploring L.A.'s own rich biodiversity through NHM's BioSCAN project. Join her for some big facts about these tiny inhabitants, like their many surprising uses for slime!

Thursday, November 19 from 11:30am - 12:00pm

#### **Live Animal Presentation: Vertebrates**

Join the Live Animal Care Team to learn about vertebrates!

Monday, November 23 from 1pm - 1:30pm

### **Meet Leslie Harris: Weird worms and pretty polychaetes**

Leslie Harris has worked with the Museum's polychaete collection since 1988. With more than 16,000 described species, these segmented worms come in an amazing array of body forms and sizes. Learn about the many ways they use slime to survive!

Monday, November 30 from 1pm - 1:30pm

### **Meet Dean Pentcheff and Regina Wetzer: Floating forests and amazing algae**

NHM's marine biodiversity experts Dr. Regina Wetzer and Dean Pentcheff are teaming up to talk about all things algae! Discover how giant kelp creates incredible ocean communities for various organisms and what slimy secrets are contained within these dense floating forests.

Thursday, December 3 from 11:30am - 12:00pm

### **Live Animal Presentation: Invertebrates**

Join the Live Animal Care Team to learn about invertebrates!

Monday, December 7 from 1pm - 1:30pm

### **Meet Jann Vendetti: Snail trails and mollusc mucus**

Join Dr. Jann Vendetti, NHM's Associate Curator of Malacology (and resident snail specialist) for a glimpse into the wonderful world of molluscs! From our gardens to the sea, learn how this extremely diverse group of organisms has adapted its use of slime for different environments.

Monday, December 14 from 1pm - 1:30pm

### **Meet Greg Pauly: Slimy skin and sticky salamanders**

Dr. Greg Pauly, NHMLAC's Curator of Herpetology and Co-director of the Urban Nature Research Center, studies the natural history, evolution, and conservation of reptiles and amphibians out in the wild and within neighborhoods just like yours! Learn how some of these fascinating creatures use their slimy and sticky skin for protection against predators.

The partnership between Nickelodeon and NHM grew out of a 2019 collaboration for the Museum's annual Nature Fest. NHM teamed up with Nickelodeon to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of SpongeBob Squarepants, presenting the "**Science of SpongeBob**" to over 9,000 attendees. Along with costume character meet and greets, NHM **Marine Biodiversity Center** scientists led a hands-on activity to teach participants about the institution's ongoing eDNA research and the real species that inspired the show's main characters.

*Share it: @Nickelodeon @NHMLA #ScienceOfSlime #MindBlownLA*

For videos or images, please contact Sally Marquez, [smarquez@nhm.org](mailto:smarquez@nhm.org).

## **Scientist Bios**

### **Bill Ludt, Assistant Curator, Ichthyology**

Dr. Bill Ludt joined NHM as Assistant Curator of Ichthyology in 2019. Prior to that he was the first Collette Postdoctoral Fellow in Systematic Ichthyology at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. He holds a Ph.D. from Louisiana State University, a M.S. from the University of Texas at Austin, and a B.S. from the University of Arizona. Bill's research aims to understand how speciation and evolution occur within the largest group of vertebrates – fishes. To accomplish this, he uses a multifaceted approach, applying a variety of methods across recent and ancient time scales. Central to his research are museum specimens and the data associated with them, which he uses to obtain a diversity of information from entire genomes to digital CT scans.

### **Lisa Gonzalez, Assistant Collections Manager, Entomology**

Lisa Gonzalez, who joined NHM's BioSCAN project in 2012 as an Assistant Collections Manager, received a B.S. in Entomology from UC Riverside. She considers the museum her second home in L.A.; she first started as a volunteer back in 2001 in the Museum's Insect Zoo. These days, she spends much of her time driving around Los Angeles visiting the BioSCAN sites, checking in with the lovely folks who volunteer their time and space in their yards for the project, and gets to peek inside the samples that are chock full of wondrous microscopic little creatures.

### **Leslie Harris, Collections Manager, Polychaetes**

Leslie Harris has worked with NHM's polychaete collection since 1988. Harris is an eminent authority on the marine flora and fauna of California, and has been instrumental in the acquisition of major private polychaete collections for the museum. She is one of the founders of the Southern California Association of Marine Invertebrate Taxonomists.

### **Dean Pentcheff, Project Coordinator, DISCO**

Dean Pentcheff coordinates NHM's Diversity Initiative for the Southern California Ocean (DISCO). Prior to that, he was a co-founder and coordinator of NHM's BioSCAN survey of urban-to-non-urban arthropod biodiversity. He has a background in bioinformatics related to taxonomy and specimen collections and, prior to that, research experience in marine biomechanics focusing on animal-fluid interactions.

### **Regina Wetzer, Curator and Director, Marine Biodiversity Center**

Dr. Wetzer earned her PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of South Carolina. She had been with NHM in the mid-'80s and returned in 1999. Since 2003 she has been a Research Scientist and Director of the Marine Biodiversity Center. Her research focuses on crustacean systematics and isopod phylogeny, and she has a special fondness for sphaeromatid isopods. Dr. Wetzer's research has taken her all over the world, including Africa, Mongolia, the South Pacific, South America, and Australia.

### **Jann Vendetti, Twila Bratcher Chair in Malacological Research and Associate Curator, Malacology**

Jann Vendetti is NHM's Associate Curator of Malacology (Mollusks) and Twila Bratcher Chair in Malacological Research. She is a founding member of the Urban Nature Research Center. She is interested in the natural history, evolution, systematics, and conservation of marine and terrestrial snails— an extremely diverse group of organisms. Jann joined the museum in 2014 and has focused on collections-based research and the Snails and slugs Living in Metropolitan Environments (SLIME) project, championing the important role of community science to understanding urban-living biodiversity.

### **About the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County**

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC) include the Natural History Museum in Exposition Park, La Brea Tar Pits in Hancock Park, and the William S. Hart Museum in Newhall. They operate under the collective vision to inspire wonder, discovery, and responsibility for our natural and cultural worlds. The museums hold one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history—more than 35 million objects. Using these collections for groundbreaking scientific and historical research, the museums also incorporate them into on- and offsite nature and culture exploration in L.A. neighborhoods, and a slate of community science programs—creating indoor-outdoor visitor experiences that explore the past, present, and future. Visit [NHMLAC.ORG](http://NHMLAC.ORG) for adventure, education, and entertainment opportunities.

### **About Nickelodeon**

Nickelodeon, now in its 41<sup>st</sup> year, is the number-one entertainment brand for kids. It has built a diverse, global business by putting kids first in everything it does. The brand includes television programming and production in the United States and around the world, plus consumer products, digital, location based experiences, publishing and feature films. Nickelodeon and all related titles, characters and logos are trademarks of ViacomCBS (NASDAQ: VIA, VIAB).