

'No one receives 3 Fulbrights'

But OSU-M's Tim Berra did; he's heading back to Australia for Darwin seminar

BY LOU WHITMIRE
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MANSFIELD — Tim M. Berra, professor emeritus of evolution, ecology and organismal biology at The Ohio State University-Mansfield, is returning to the Australian Outback this fall — a place where, for years, he has done field-work on fish while fighting off crocodiles.

This trip will take a different twist.

Berra will give the keynote address to a symposium at Charles Darwin University in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. The symposium celebrates the bicentennial of Darwin's birth and 150th anniversary of the publication of his famous work "On the Origin of Species."

Berra has been awarded a Fulbright Senior Specialist grant to Charles Darwin University. The Fulbright program supports Australian educational institutions to bring U.S. senior specialists Down Under for periods of two to six weeks. It encourages collaboration with American faculty and professionals on research, curriculum development and other activities.

It is Berra's third Fulbright. Previously he was awarded a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Australian National University in Canberra in 1969 and a Senior Research Fellow at Monash University in Melbourne in 1979.

"No one receives three Fulbrights," Berra said. "I'm surprised and delighted.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Tim M. Berra, professor emeritus at The Ohio State University-Mansfield, is the author of "Charles Darwin: The Concise Story of an Extraordinary Man." He'll be speaking this fall to a symposium at Charles Darwin University in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, celebrating the bicentennial of Darwin's birth and 150th anniversary of the publication of his "On the Origin of Species."

My career began with the Fulbright post-doc, was encouraged by the Senior Fellowship, and now will end as a Fulbright Senior Specialist. I love the symmetry of it — I've come full circle.

"I have made a career out of studying strange Australian fishes, and it's all due to the Fulbright program."

Berra, the author of a recent book entitled, "Charles Darwin: The Concise Story of an Extraordinary Man," also will deliver at least three other lectures on unusual Australian fish he has studied during the past 40 years. He also will present

the same lectures at Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia.

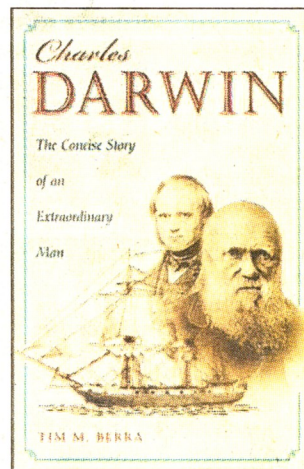
A St. Louis native, Berra has studied Darwin his entire professional life, even before coming to OSU-M in January 1972.

Darwin (1809-1882) was an extraordinary man by any standard, Berra said.

"The theory of evolution by natural selection as elaborated in his book, 'On the Origin of Species,' is considered by historians and philosophers of science to be one of the most important ideas ever had by the human mind," Berra said. "I'm going to talk

about his family, the books that he wrote, his relatives, parents, grandparents, children. He wrote 21 books.

"I'll show why his life is such an exemplary model for the rest of us as scientists. He was a terrific family man. He had 10 children, a devoted wife. He had this wonderful 'Voyage of The Beagle' early on, where he traveled around the world for five years. That's what gave him a lot of insight into how species change, particularly on the Galapagos Islands. He could see that the turtles were different from one island to the next. What sense did that



Berra's "Charles Darwin: The Concise Story of an Extraordinary Man" was published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

make? Prevailing view at the time was everything was created by a supernatural being. What sense does it make that they're different on these islands which are in sight of one other?

"This is what led him to natural selection. He had observations there's variations in nature. He also noticed there are many more offspring produced than survive."

Berra's book on Darwin, published by Johns Hopkins University Press, is proving popular.

"They said this book is their third biggest seller for their fiscal year, which ended this June," he said.

In 1995, Berra took early retirement to do research full time.

"I just love my life," he said.

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