The BDJ News section accepts items that include general news, latest research and diary events that interest our readers. Press releases or articles may be edited, and should include a colour photograph if possible.

Please direct your correspondence to the News Editor, Kate Maynard at the BDJ, The Macmillan Building, 4 Crinan Street, London, N1 9XW or by email to k.maynard@nature.com

LOOK AFTER THE PENNIES AND THE PURSE WILL LOOK AFTER ITSELF

The striking image threatening to snap at your fingertips on the cover of this issue, 'Purse with teeth' (2010), is by US-born surrealist artist Nancy Fouts.

Fouts, who is originally from Seattle, produces immaculately executed artworks, often combining everyday objects so that they are viewed anew, such as 'Owl Butterfly' (pictured), a dart with butterfly wings, a budgie whose cage is an electric heater with a wooden bar, and a 'harmonica hive' where bees are seen crawling into a harmonica's metal grill.

Fouts was sent to the UK by her parents in the early 1960s to be a debutante and ended up studying art at Chelsea College of Art and Design. 'My parents were living in Africa so they put me in a finishing school. I spent that time learning how to shoplift and getting my hair cut. Then I applied to Chelsea and away we go.'

Fouts worked commercially as a model maker in advertising for many years, then 15 years ago started working as a full-time artist out of the basement at her

home in London. She believes her Surrealist take on life may have stemmed from her father, who was a beachcomber. He used to drag unusual items back from the beach and exclaim that he could see images in them, for example charging horses in a piece of driftwood.

Fouts is represented by the Pertwee Anderson & Gold Gallery in Soho, London. Examples of Nancy's work sit in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum and she has a wide celebrity following with known collectors including Jude Law and Eddie Izzard amongst others.

Look out for another cover by Nancy Fouts in our current 'Tooth Art' series on Volume 214 issue 11. www.nancyfouts.com

©Nancy Fouts courtesy Pertwee, Anderson & Gold Gallery London

CAN YOU SEAL 20,000 MOLARS?

The 'Seal Cambodia' project is seeking self-funded volunteer dentists, dental hygienists, dental therapists and senior dental students to go to Cambodia for 1-2 weeks to work in primary schools and help achieve a goal of sealing 20,000 children's first permanent molars in a year.

Seal Cambodia aims to save children's teeth in a country where the levels of caries are among the highest in the world.

The project can arrange to collect volunteers from the airport, accommodation, local sightseeing, transport, and assistants to work with you. Training on sealant placement will be given.

sealcambodia@hotmail.com

THE EARLY BIRD GETS THE HARD EXOSKELETONS

A recent study¹ following the first discovery of a bird with ornamented enamel, the *Sulcavis geeorum*, suggests the teeth of this early bird, which lived over 120 million years ago, were used to eat a special diet of prey with hard exoskeletons. Serrated edges, preserved ridges and striations were observed on the teeth; ornamentation never before seen in any bird species. While other birds were losing their teeth during this period, it would seem certain types of birds were developing different dental morphologies. Why the *Sulcavis geeorum* and other such birds became extinct is unknown, though diet was presumably a significant factor.

Recent evidence² on the demise of the sabre-toothed cat and the American lion contradicts previous studies that suggest difficult times meant they starved their way to extinction, with broken teeth a result of having to gnaw bone once prey became scarce. Dental

microwear texture analysis reveals they may have gnawed carcasses less than carnivores do today.

Tooth wear more closely resembles that of the cheetah, which actively avoids bone, than the hyena, which gnaws on the majority of a carcass. Tooth breakage is widely displayed in these extinct animals; scientists propose this was an outcome of hunting far larger prey.

1. O'Connor J K, Zhang Y, Chiappe L M, Meng Q, Quanguo L, Di L. A new enantiornithine from the Yixian formation with the first recognized avian enamel specialization. *J Vertebrate Paleontology* 2013; **33**: 1-12.
2. DeSantis L R G, Schubert B W, Scott J R, Ungar P S. Implications of diet for the extinction of sabre-toothed cats and American lions. *PLoS ONE* 2012; **7**: e52453.

By Laura Pacey