

# Club preserves Irish culture

**Truman State Ceilidh Club teaches members about Irish history and dance**

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During the 1800s, while the English were in Ireland and Irish Catholics were being oppressed, "ceilidhs" became a way to preserve Irish culture. The ceilidhs brought people together to speak the original Irish language, which was being wiped out and replaced by English. These parties involved folk music, singing, storytelling and, most importantly, Irish dance. Sophomore Alyssa Hoadley said the Ceilidh Club at Truman State not only remembers this history, but also continues the tradition of preserving it.

The Ceilidh Club meets Thursday evenings in Baldwin Hall to practice Irish dancing, Hoadley said. While the group's 13 members traditionally have focused mostly on learning the dance, club leadership has called for more lessons about Ireland, its history and culture, Hoadley said.

"When it originally started, it was a group that taught how to do Irish dances, but at the same time, there was also an aspect of Irish culture that they tried to bring to the group," Hoadley said. "We've kind of lost that focus, the cultural aspect, but this year our president decided we were going to try that again."

The group now takes at least 15 minutes of every weekly meeting to discuss Irish culture, Hoadley said. She said the group often compares different styles of dance and discusses Irish lessons. She has learned the history of Irish dance and fun facts, like why Irish dancers always dance with their arms down, she said.

Hoadley said she is of Irish descent, but she said students don't have to have Irish blood to appreciate the culture. She said she is happy to see the group incorporating more cultural lessons into their meetings and keeping it alive.

"Like with any culture, if you don't preserve it and if you don't introduce it to new people, it's eventually going to

die out," Hoadley said. "Irish dance has changed so much over the generations ... If you don't continually keep it up, eventually it's going to turn into something completely unrecognizable."

As its name suggests, the club typically does a style of step dancing called ceilidh dancing, which simply means group dancing, Hoadley said. Now, the group also has started studying sean-nos, the dance style junior co-president Brianna Betzen studied during a trip to Ireland. Hoadley said much of the cultural discussion the group has is about comparing these two styles of dance.

Betzen, who is a quarter Irish, said she has been an Irish dancer for 13 years and is following her older sister's footsteps as the Ceilidh Club president.

Before Betzen was involved with the organization, she said the group used to discuss language and culture and would invite guest speakers to present. When the club recently looked at their old constitution, Betzen said they wanted to update the group and bring the cultural element back.

After studying abroad in Ireland last summer, Betzen said she has plenty of cultural knowledge to share with the group.

Betzen said she studied the dance style sean-nos during a class she took while in Ireland. Sean-nos is an old, traditional style of dance performed mostly by men, she said. It's a "hard-shoe" style of dance, versus the "soft-shoe" style the group generally performs, she said.

"It's very down to earth and grounded," Betzen said. "It's like clogging versus soft dancing, and we're starting to bring it back into the club."

Soft-shoe dancing, the group's primary style of dance, is light and involves dancing on the toes with ballet flats, Betzen said, while hard-shoe dancing involves shoes with wooden heels and wooden toes.

"I think it's really important to understand how a type of dance started, because then you can really understand what it means and how it is really important to the original people and why it's been kept as long as it has," Betzen said. "So many people in the Midwest are from Irish descent so I think it's really important to understand and be able to



Sam Gorden/Index

Senior Serena Karraker, left, dances with sophomore Alyssa Hoadley during a Ceilidh Club practice Jan. 17. The group meets at 8 p.m. Thursdays in Baldwin Hall 251 to practice traditional Irish dances and discuss Irish culture.

embrace our heritage."

Alumna Cassandra White said she joined for that reason. Her family is half Irish and she always has had an interest in Irish dancing and culture, she said. White said she is excited to see the group branch out and incorporate more history and culture because many members join to learn about it.

The history of Ireland is a tumultuous one, White said, but the Ceilidh Club's

refocus on preserving the history is reflective of a global effort. She said Irish culture has started to become popular again thanks to recognizable symbols like St. Patrick's Day.

"I think it's very interesting, and it's important to preserve it just like any culture," White said. "I'm a huge fan of the folklore especially, and preserving the history and culture because there's so much we can learn from it."

## IRISH DANCING TERMINOLOGY

**Ceili:** A gathering for Irish music and dance.

**Damhsa:** Pronounced "dow-sa." Irish Gaelic for "dance."

**Féile:** Pronounced "fay-lah." A competition focused solely on dance, without the crafts, music and language competitions a feis might have.

**Feis:** Pronounced "fesh." A festival of step dancing, crafts, instrumental and vocal music.



**Ghillies:** The standard soft shoes worn by Irish dancers. Distinctive in appearance, they lace up from near the toe to up and around the ankle and lower leg.

**Hard shoe:** Black leather shoes with hard toes and heels, used to make a rhythmic drumming sound during a dance.

according to: burkeirishdance.com

# Jackson's Chameleons come to campus

**Two new chameleons have found a home at the Herpetology Lab**

BY SAM SHERMAN  
For the Index

Truman State's Herpetology Laboratory in Magruder Hall gained two new additions to its collection of reptiles and amphibians during November.

The lab added two Jackson's Chameleons — one male, one female — donated from a former student named Melissa VanKleeck now living in Hawaii. The lab's director, professor Chad Montgomery, said new acquisitions to the lab almost come exclusively from third-party donations.

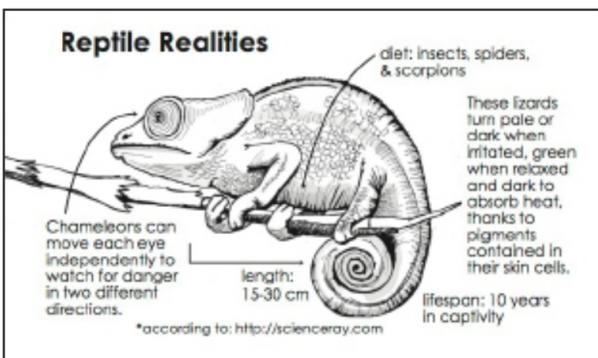
"We typically don't buy new animals, so almost everything in here has been given to us from various sources," Montgomery said. "A former student is doing her Ph.D. in Hawaii right now, so she sent [the Jackson's chameleons] to us."

The Jackson's Chameleon is a species that is invasive in Hawaii, meaning they were introduced to the Hawaiian ecosystem because there are no lizard or snake species native to Hawaii. Montgomery said the decision to introduce the species to the Hawaiian ecosystem was fueled by the desire to harvest the chameleons and sell them in the pet trade. However, because



Emily Battmer/Index

A Jackson's Chameleon lounges Monday in his habitat in Magruder Hall. The chameleon was donated by a former student.



harsher rules regulated the trade of Jackson's Chameleons in recent years, it is harder to obtain them. Montgomery said

VanKleeck obtained the proper permits to ship the chameleons to the lab for its education and outreach programs, giving her-

petology lab visitors a rare glimpse of a species not natural to the continental United States.

Sophomore Herpetology Lab worker Katie Caragher said it is important for the lab to consistently gain new species to provide fresh learning opportunities for the workers and the lab visitors.

"One of our main goals is to educate the public, to educate kids and students about herpetology," Caragher said. "With any sort of program like this, we need new animals so that we can teach other people about them."

The Jackson's Chameleon is a species native to eastern Africa, specifically areas with lower temperatures and more humidity such as Kenya and Tanzania, Caragher said. The primary feature of the male Jackson's Chameleon is three horns protruding from its head. Montgomery said the horns are used to spar with other males when competing for female mates.

Caragher said the chameleons do change color, but contrary to popular belief, it is not to blend in with their surroundings. Caragher said chameleons change color in relation to their mood. If a chameleon is in a bad mood, it will turn dark while good moods bring lighter colors.

Senior Alex Dalecki, who serves as the Herpetology lab's Community Outreach Director, said the chameleons are a good addition to the lab because of

the many misconceptions surrounding the species.

"Everybody knows about chameleons," Dalecki said. "I mean, it's a really common lizard, but there's a lot of myths about chameleons."

He said the Jackson's Chameleons offer good learning opportunities for grade school students, especially when he presents them and they get darker because of the stressful environment.

Caragher said the lab workers followed the same procedure after acquiring the Jackson's Chameleons during November that they always follow when obtaining a new animal.

Specifically, the lab workers placed the new animals in quarantine for 48 hours to ensure a lack of diseases and viruses, and then they put them in a holding tank in the lab before transitioning them to the viewing areas.

Montgomery said he oversees the lab, but mostly students organize it. When obtaining a new animal, he instructs the lab workers about how to care for them and what precautions to take when handling them, and then gives the job to the lab workers.

The chameleons will be added to the lab's repertoire of animals they put on display in the lab and present to grade school students when they visit campus. They can be seen anytime in Magruder Hall.