ECU professor totes spiders to Colbert Report

By Kristin Day
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University professor and biologist Jason Bond made his national television debut last night with a personal appearance on Comedy Central faux news show, "The Colbert Report."

Bond, who specializes in taxonomy and phylogeny of spiders and millipedes, brought along a number of trapdoor spiders for the comedian to check out, so he could choose which one would be named after him.

Because of the show's night-time taping schedule, Bond was not available for an interview. But the biologist previously told The Daily Reflector that Colbert was "a very nice fellow" during his phone interview, which aired June 24.

"And of course he plays a character on the show," Bond said.

Colbert announced July 30 he would bring Bond — who he referred to as "noted spider man" — on the show Wednesday after referring to another spider, the Myrmekeaphila neilyoungi, which Bond named after rock musician Neil Young.

"Well guess what, Neil?" Colbert said. "What goes around lays eggs around. 'Cause that same biologist, Jason Bond, is now naming a spider after me.

"All I had to do was shamelessly beg on national television."

The spider he chose will be named Aptomischus stephencolberti and was discovered by Bond in 2007 in California.

Last night's episode airs again today on Comedy Central at 10:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., and will be available online today at www.reflector.com.

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Average ER waiting time nears 1 hour, CDC says

BY MIKE STOBBE
The Associated Press

The increase is due to supply and demand, said Dr. Stephen Pitts, the lead author of the report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"There are more people arriving at the ERs. And there are fewer ERs," said Pitts, an associate professor of emergency medicine at Atlanta's Emory University.

At Pitt County Memorial Hospital, the average emergency department wait time, from arrival to placement in a room has been 60 minutes, according to PCMH media specialist Jimmy Ryals.

The hospital's average wait time in July, however, was 47 minutes. Ryals said the hospital's goal is to get patients into rooms in 60 minutes or less.

"We're continually striving to make the wait time shorter and the experience better," said Dr. Timothy Reeder, clinical director of the Emergency Department at PCMH and an associate professor of emergency medicine at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University.

Nationwide, about 119 million visits were made to emergency rooms in 2006, up from 90 million in 1996 - a 32 percent increase.

Meanwhile, the number of hospital emergency departments dropped to fewer than 4,600, from nearly 4,900, according to American Hospital Association statistics.

Another reason for crowding is patients who are admitted to the hospital end

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up waiting in the ER because of the limited number of hospital beds, Pitts added.

The amount of time a patient waited before seeing a physician in an ER has been rising steadily, from 38 minutes in 1997, to 47 minutes in 2004, to 56 minutes in 2006. Pitts added that 56 minutes may be the average, but it's not typical: The average was skewed to nearly an hour because of some very long waits.

"Half of people had waiting times of 31 minutes or less," Pitts noted.

Researchers also found that there has not been any recent increases in the number of patients arriving by ambulance, or in the number of cases considered to be true emergencies.

Black patients visited emergency departments at twice the rate as whites in 2006. Among age groups, the highest visitation rates were for infants and elderly people aged 75 and older.
College study free for high-schoolers

BY BENJAMIN NIOLET
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — Gov. Mike Easley said Wednesday that high school students have an amazing opportunity. If only they knew about it.

Easley spoke to superintendents and school leaders Wednesday to announce an aggressive marketing campaign to promote Learn and Earn Online, a program that allows high school students across the state to take online college courses free.

The program has earned nationwide recognition, but few students have taken advantage of it. The program had enough money for 12,000 course enrollments in the 2007-2008 school year and 28,000 this year. Fewer than 2,000 students have taken courses.

But Easley remains confident in the program's potential.

"This has been bigger and better than anything I ever dreamed that it would be," Easley said. "But it's also the best-kept secret in education in North Carolina."

Easley said that starting this week, officials will use a mix of public money and private dollars from education groups to promote Learn and Earn Online to students, parents and educators. The legislature authorized the state Department of Public Instruction to use up to $1 million to promote programs such as Learn and Earn Online.

The New Schools Project, a nonprofit created by Easley and others with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has already raised $500,000 for the effort, Easley said.

The campaign will involve television commercials and Internet ads and other strategies, including student ambassadors who will promote options for students to middle schoolers. And Easley spoke to the meeting of school officials to encourage them to push the program even more.

Tedarryl Powell, 16, and his mother, Dana Powell, attended Easley's speech Wednesday. Tedarryl is a rising junior at Clement Early College High School in Durham, which combines high school and college curriculum.

When he graduates, Tedarryl will have more than a semester's worth of college under his belt. That will save his mother money when Tedarryl goes to college. He plans to be a dermatologist.

Tedarryl has agreed to promote campuses such as Clement and online offerings to middle school students. He said he agrees with Easley's assertion that more people would take advantage of the opportunity, if only they knew about it.

"It makes a lot of sense," Tedarryl said. "Unless you like to give away money," added his mother.

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