

NMNH Collection Visitor's Code of Conduct
Developed by the NMNH Collections Managers Council
Approved by the Associate Director and Chief Scientist
October 26, 2022

Welcome to the collections of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History. This Code is intended to support the preservation of the collections, and ensure the safety and well-being of visitors and staff. We strive to create an environment where people feel welcome, respected, and valued. NMNH is also committed to excellence in collections stewardship. In keeping with our Collections Management Policy and best practice guidelines established at museums worldwide, we have implemented this Code of Conduct for all individuals engaged with collections at the Natural History Building, the Garber Facility and the Museum Support Center. For the purposes of this Code, visitors are defined as guests coming to use the collections for more than one day who do not have a Smithsonian-issued photo badge.

Everyone working in the collections is expected to comply with federal and state law at all times when accessing the collection, as well as NMNH's Collections Management Policy and any Department-specific rules that exist. At its sole discretion, NMNH retains the right to terminate a Visitor's access to its collection for good cause.

The Natural History building and Museum Support Center collections are typically open for use by visitors during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The collections are closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and US federal holidays. An NMNH staff member associated with the particular collection in use must be present when a visitor is working in the collections. Departments may set more limited hours within the 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. window, at their discretion.

Standards for working with specimens:

- All users must treat museum specimens with care and respect. While using our collections, it is your responsibility to ensure that specimens are properly handled. Under no circumstances is it permissible to take, remove, modify, mark, alter, subsample, or deface specimens in any way absent explicit written authorization from the Department Chair, Curator in Charge or Collection Manager.
- Permission to work in one sector of the museum is exclusive to that sector and does not authorize access to other sectors, collections, or departments. Access is limited to the collections specified in the Visitor's request for the purposes approved within the request. Likewise, permission to work in collections is exclusive to the individual—you may not extend your access privileges to others.
- Food, drink, smoking and vaping are prohibited in collection spaces. Smithsonian policies regarding safety and risk mitigation actions must be observed. Non-compliance means access may be revoked. Non-compliance may also be a factor in determining eligibility for collections access in the future.

Standards for interaction:

We strive to create an environment where people feel welcome, respected, and valued. The NMNH will not tolerate offensive, disrespectful, or harassing displays or behavior by anyone and against anyone, either in person or via indirect or electronic communication. Individuals engaging in behavior deemed to be offensive, disrespectful, a safety risk to individuals or the collection, or harassing—or who disregard instructions (verbal or written) given by Museum staff to the same effect—may be asked to leave the collections and have their access revoked. Non-compliance may also be a factor in determining eligibility for collections access in the future. NMNH staff are also bound by this standard.

Standards for Image and Information Use:

Visitors are welcome to create specimen images related to the purpose of their visit for use in publication and additional research. They should request permission before they create or share images or other details on social media, the internet, or other written resources regarding collection items (other than those on exhibit) without explicit written approval. Visitors may also not share images of others conducting behind-the-scenes activity without their permission, nor share confidential information from behind the scenes. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in a Visitor's access being revoked, as well as a requirement that the image or content be removed.

Unit-Specific Rules:

This code of conduct addresses general minimum expectations of conduct for working with NMNH collections. Visitors should inquire about any department-specific rules and abide by them.

DECLARATIONS and SIGNATURE

By signing this document, I agree that I have read and understood the NMNH Code of Conduct for NMNH collection users, and that I understand that I must also abide by all additional rules put in place by the managers of the specific collection units that I wish to visit. I also understand that I may be denied access to collections for non-compliance to this Code of Conduct. My signature on this form is required for issuance of a SI 225 Visitor's Badge.

Signature, Printed Name and Date

Start/End Dates of Visit

Visit Host, Printed Name and Date

This form is submitted to the Visit Host and is used to justify authorization of a SI 225 badge