The Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History is celebrating the cultural heritage of Taiwan with the “Taiwan Heritage Festival” on Jan. 25. The festival presents demonstrations of traditional Taiwanese crafts, including dough sculpting, grass weaving and paper cutting. The crafts demonstrations will take place in the Evans Gallery (outside the Museum stores) starting at noon and ending at 2:50 p.m. The festival then will move into the Baird Auditorium, where remarks will be made followed by four short performances by the Taiwanese American Cultural Dance Association and CKS Dance Academy. Performances include “Formosan Village Dance,” “Celebration of the Harvest, “Colorful Ribbon Welcoming Spring” and “Orchid in the Valley.” A demonstration of the Chinese yoyo (also known as “diablo”) will be presented. Activities in Baird Auditorium will start at 3 p.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. All programs are free and open to the public.

“Anthropologically, Taiwan is a very important and interesting place,” said Paul Michael Taylor, director of the museum’s Asian Cultural History Program and curator for the Taiwan Heritage Project. “Its indigenous Austronesian inhabitants link it to other parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, while more recent cultural and political history also has enriched its strong East Asia heritage.” Taylor will open the Baird Auditorium events with a brief summary of the Smithsonian’s Taiwanese collections and the project’s activities in the past year. Representative David Tawei Lee of the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington, D.C. also will deliver welcoming remarks prior to the dance performances in Baird Auditorium.
The “Taiwan Heritage Festival” is sponsored by the museum’s office of education, in cooperation with the Taiwan Heritage Project, a research and outreach component of the Asian Cultural History Program in the department of anthropology. The Smithsonian’s Taiwan Heritage Project, launched in 2004, was established to support Smithsonian research, collection improvement and public programs about Taiwanese cultural heritage; it also encourages cooperation with Taiwanese scholarly institutions.

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W., in Washington, D.C., welcomed more than six million people in 2004, making it the most visited natural history museum in the world. Opened in 1910, the museum is dedicated to maintaining and preserving the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. It also fosters critical scientific research as well as educational programs and exhibitions that present the work of its scientists and curators to the public. The museum is part of the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research complex. The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History is open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 a.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free.