

## Visitor Information and Procedures

### Division of Birds: Department of Vertebrate Zoology: National Museum of Natural History: Smithsonian Institution

#### Contact:

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The Division of Birds' vast collections of research specimens and library are used by scientists, graduate students and others from around the world. On average we host between 200 and 400 visitors annually. The collection is primarily used for basic research on birds. The collection and library are not open to the general public for tours, general browsing, artistic ventures or other activities that might disrupt the scientific users.

All visitors are requested to arrange visits in advance by contacting the Collections Manager. Specific research questions can be directed to Dr. Terry Chesser and Dr. Mercedes Foster (USGS curators or Dr. Gary Graves and Dr. Helen James (Smithsonian curators). Due to reductions in our staff size, we may not always be able to accommodate unannounced visitors.

**The Division of Birds is open 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.** Arrangements to arrive earlier or to work later can be requested on a case by case basis, but may not be possible. The collection is closed to visitors on weekends and federal holidays. Long term visitors can discuss the possibility for extended hours with the collections staff.

Visitors are reminded that parking at the museum is very limited or nonexistent. You are encouraged to use public transportation whenever possible. The Metro subway stops at Smithsonian, Archives, and Federal Triangle are within easy walking distance to the Natural History Museum. There are a number of commercial parking garages within 5 blocks of the museum.

**Visitors should arrive at the 10th and Constitution Avenue entrance.** Enter through the 'staff entrance' and tell the guard that you are a visiting researcher. They will direct you to a Security Office located in the Constitution Avenue lobby. We will arrange for you to receive a behind the scenes pass to gain access to the non-public areas of the building. A staff member will be called to escort you to the division.

#### Use of Collection Guidelines:

- ◆ All Visitors must sign in the division guest register. Please provide complete information as requested.
- ◆ Only approved specimens, species, groups, etc may be used during your visit. If you need to look at additional groups of specimens, please ask collections staff for permission before browsing the collections.

- ◆ Handle study specimens with care. Please use paper trays or drawers to transport specimens to the work area. Return specimens to their original location after use.
- ◆ No drinking, smoking or eating is permitted in the research collections. Smoking is not permitted anywhere within the museum.
- ◆ Specimens may not be altered in any way without prior permission. Dissections, removal of feathers, skin samples or removing ecto-parasites are not permitted without an approved destructive sampling request.
- ◆ Notations on specimen, case or drawer labels is forbidden without prior permission.
- ◆ Do not leave specimens out after use or overnight. Close cases immediately when not in use.
- ◆ Specimens removed from collection for study for more than two days must have a removal slip prepared and placed in the collection.
- ◆ Please be advised that most of our study skins were treated with arsenic trioxide, may contain lead, or have other hazardous materials present. Gloves are available for your use.
- ◆ Please turn off lights over work tables and in the aisles when you are not using them.
- ◆ Access to types and specimens of certain rare species is restricted. Please ask the collections management staff for assistance if you need to look at this material.
- ◆ Requests for hand-carried loans usually cannot be honored as the curatorial committee must review your written request
- ◆ For publication purposes, the correct museum acronym for the National Museum of Natural History is "USNM", regardless of the label heading. We request a reprint or PDF file for all publications resulting from use of our specimens.

The majority of our specimens have been entered into our database. The collections staff can provide an Excel file of the specimen data when requested. Please request a data file prior to your visit if at all possible.

Do not leave cameras, purses, or wallets unattended in a work area, even for a short time. Conceal them in a nearby closet or case. Ask a collections staff member for assistance.

If you have any questions about the use of the specimens or the collections, please feel free to ask the collections management staff. Please bring misidentifications or damaged specimens and labels to our attention.

#### Off-Site Collections

The bulk of our collections are housed at the museum located at 10th and Constitution, NW. However, a portion of the collection including some skins as well as all nests, eggs, and fluid preserved specimens have been moved to our Museum Support Center in suburban Maryland. The museum provides a regular shuttle bus to and from the Museum Support Center.

Visitors wishing to examine specimens at the Museum Support Center must make arrangements with our staff prior to your visit, as a staff member must accompany you to this off-site facility.

Visitors should allow for extra time to accommodate travel time to and from this facility. The Museum Support Center maintains strict inventory control over specimen movement in and out of the building through its shipping office. Visitors planning to bring comparative material into the MSC facility must let the Collections Management Staff know in advance. A list of specimens being brought into the building must be presented, along with the specimens, to the shipping officer.