

American Museum of Natural History
Department of Mammalogy
October 5, 2009

Visitor Guidelines

These guidelines are in place to protect the collections and the individuals working with them, and to ensure the security of the department. We expect all visitors to be familiar with these policies and reserve the right to revoke visitor privileges at our discretion.

Hours and Access

Visiting dates are by appointment only. We can accommodate only a limited number of visitors each day, so we recommend scheduling your visit at least two weeks in advance. The department is open to visitors between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding museum holidays (listed on the website at <http://research.amnh.org/vz/mammalogy/collection/visiting>).

To schedule a visit, all visitors must submit a visitor registration form (also available on the department website). Students must provide a letter from their advisor the first time they visit the collections. Only researchers with appropriate credentials will be allowed access to specimens.

Visitors without badges must check in at the 1st floor Security Desk each day to receive a temporary identification sticker. Visitors who have an AMNH security badge must have it with them at all times during their visit.

Assistants

The department does not allow visitors to bring research assistants with them to work in the Department of Mammalogy without prior approval. Every individual visiting the collection must submit a visitor registration form and be approved before their arrival.

Equipment

Dissecting microscopes and copy stands are available in the department for visitor use. Visitors must bring any other necessary equipment and accessories with them (including calipers, photography scales, and cameras). If you have any equipment related questions we encourage you to call or email before your visit.

For pest control purposes we do not allow organic materials (such as mustard seeds) to be used for volumetric measurements. Please bring glass beads instead.

Food and Drink

Visitors may have a re-sealable water bottle with them while working in the collections; no other food or drink is allowed. Visitors will be given access to the staff cafeteria, which is open for breakfast and lunch.

Collection Organization

Specimens are organized systematically, with genera, species and subspecies (when appropriate) arranged alphabetically within families. Within each nominal taxon specimens are organized alphabetically by locality (country, province, specific locality).

Specimens must be returned to their precise storage locations without mixing up specimens or elements. As skeletal elements are removed and returned to vials, boxes and trays, it is very important to carefully double check that the number written directly on the element matches the specimen number on the box or vial label. Cabinet doors should never be left open.

Handling Specimens

Specimens are irreplaceable and must be treated with extreme care. Visitors may not mark, damage, or alter specimens in any way, even temporarily. Similarly, alteration of the specimen tags or any markings that appear on the specimen is forbidden. Please also avoid using any material that could leave behind a residue. Mammalogy staff will monitor the condition of specimens as they are used.

Any protocol that may have a lasting effect on the specimens (such as molding), must be approved well in advance of any visit. Requests for approval must be submitted by filling out a Destructive Sampling Application (available on the department website at <http://research-staging.amnh.org/vz/mammalogy/collection-information/destructive-sampling>)

For approved destructive sampling protocols, all specimens will be checked by a staff member before being returned to the collections.

Reporting

Visitors are asked to report any signs of pest infestation, broken cabinets, or other damage to specimens or specimen housings to a Mammalogy staff member. We ask that visitors who find misplaced elements or misidentifications bring the issue to the attention of Mammalogy staff, without attempting to remove the specimen from the collection, and without making any corrections.

Chemicals in the Collections

The more than 280,000 specimens in the collections were obtained through the collective efforts of thousands of individual collectors over the course of more than 150 years. Many of these specimens were likely treated with insecticides, including arsenic compounds, but it is impossible for us to know the details of how each specimen was prepared. When working with our collections, we ask that you take appropriate precautions for handling museum specimens. Nitrile gloves are provided at the workstations, and we recommend that you wash your hands

frequently, especially before eating or touching your mouth. The yellow boxes in the collection contain a pesticide and should not be handled.

Evacuation Procedure and Safety

In the event of a museum emergency, listen for and follow the instructions broadcast over the security loudspeakers. In case of an evacuation, the designated meeting point for Mammalogy staff and visitors is at the corner of 77th Street and Columbus Avenue. Once there, report to a staff member wearing an orange safety vest. If you are asked to evacuate, please do not worry about specimens or equipment, and leave the department immediately.

If you experience an emergency, call security by dialing 2222 from a museum phone. If you call 911 directly it is advisable to also notify security so that they can help coordinate the fastest response.

Questions

If you have any questions about these guidelines or about visiting the collections please contact Eileen Westwig at (212) 769-5478 or mammvisits@amnh.org.