

# **New England Small Natural History Museums Survey Summary**

Prepared by: Casey McCabe, Collections Specialist  
September 2016

## **Survey Participants:**

Berkshire Museum - Pittsfield, MA  
Boston Children's Museum – Boston, MA  
Bruce Museum of Arts and Science – Greenwich, CT  
Cape Cod Museum of Natural History - Brewster, MA  
College of the Holy Cross – Worcester, MA  
EcoTarium - Worcester, MA  
Edna Lawrence Nature Lab – Providence, RI  
L.C. Bates Museum – Hinkley, ME  
Maria Mitchell Association - Nantucket, MA  
Montshire Museum of Science- Norwich, VT  
Museum of Natural History and Planetarium – Providence, RI  
Natural History Collections at UMass Amherst - Amherst, MA  
Perkins Museum of Geology – Burlington, VT  
Southern Vermont Natural History Museum – Marlboro, VT  
Springfield Science Museum – Springfield, MA  
Stamford Museum and Nature Center – Stamford, CT  
The Little Nature Museum – Warner, NH  
The Nature Museum at Grafton – Grafton, VT

## **Worcester Natural History Society dba EcoTarium**

Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant

**Increasing Inventorying Capacity at the EcoTarium and other Institutions with Small Natural History Collections: The Volunteer-Based Inventorying Protocol (VBI Protocol)**

FAIN: MA-30-15-0344-15

**Berkshire Museum - Pittsfield, MA**Contact: Van Shields ([vshields@berkshireremuseum.org](mailto:vshields@berkshireremuseum.org))

Survey prepared by Maria Mingalone, Scott Jervas, Jason Verchot

The Berkshire Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1830-2000	2,616 (2,281 Native American, 197 Oceanic, 138 African)	Pottery, baskets, garments
Archaeology	1881-1980	1,649	Stone tools, arrowheads, pottery
Archives/ Library	1881-1980	4,342	Books, journals, photographs
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1901-1960	128	Pressed plant specimens
Entomology/ Arachnology	1881-Present	2,843 species (with multiple specimens per species)	Pinned specimens
Herpetology	1901-1980	55	Skeletons, skins, fluid preserved specimens
Ichthyology	1901-1980	137	Fluid preserved specimens, mounts
Malacology	1840-1980	36,000	Shells
Mammalogy	1861-1980	200	Taxidermy, some skeletal
Mineralogy/ Geology	1881-1980	4,000	Minerals
Oology	1840-1920	1,000	Eggs
Ornithology	1841-1940	730	Taxidermy, some study skins and skeletons
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1881-1980	314	Fossils
Technology, Historic	1821-1940	75	Artifacts, microscopes, wax music cylinders with player, etc.
Special Collections	Louis Paul Jonas Model Collection: “World in Miniature” – Dioramas with 200 animal models “Wally” – Life size Stegosaurus model Triceratops – Models showing stages of growth		

**Boston Children's Museum – Boston, MA**

Contact: Rachel Farkas ([farkas@bostonchildrensmuseum.org](mailto:farkas@bostonchildrensmuseum.org)) and Brittany Contratto ([Contratto@bostonchildrensmuseum.org](mailto:Contratto@bostonchildrensmuseum.org))

Survey prepared by Brittany Contratto

The Boston Children's Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1901-Present	~10,000 – 15,000	Variety of objects
Archaeology	1901-Present	~1,000 – 2,500	Variety of objects
Entomology/ Arachnology	1901-Present	~200	Pinned specimens
Herpetology	1901-Present	~40	Taxidermy
Ichthyology	1901-Present	~40	Dry specimens
Malacology	1901-Present	~90	Dry specimens
Mammalogy	1901-Present	~80	Taxidermy, some teeth and tusks
Mineralogy/ Geology	1901-Present	~200	Dry minerals
Oology	1901-Present	~955	Eggs, nests
Ornithology	1901-Present	~220	Taxidermy, generally mounted on a branch
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1901-Present	~175	Dry specimens
Technology, Historic	1901-Present	~100-250	Equipment from lithics to electronics
Marine Invertebrates	1901-Present	~45	Dry specimens
Special Collections	Anna Slocum – 2 collections of materials relating to objects from Japan and the Philippines dating pre-1900 Katherine Hall Newall - Extensive collection of Native American objects collected throughout 20 <sup>th</sup> Century		

**Bruce Museum of Arts and Science – Greenwich, CT**

Contact: Daniel Sepka ([dksepka@brucemuseum.org](mailto:dksepka@brucemuseum.org)) and Cynthia Ehlinger ([cynthiae@brucemuseum.org](mailto:cynthiae@brucemuseum.org))

The Bruce Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1861-Present	Not provided	Not provided
Archaeology	1861-Present	Not provided	Not provided
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1861-Present	663	Herbarium sheets
Entomology/ Arachnology	1861-Present	1,515	Dried specimens, pinned specimens
Herpetology	1861-Present	40	Skeletal, skins, models, taxidermy
Ichthyology	1861-Present	22	Dried specimens, taxidermy, models, skeletal
Malacology	1861-Present	1,693	Shells
Mammalogy	1861-Present	399	Taxidermy, skeletal
Mineralogy/ Geology	1861-Present	1,872	Minerals of various sizes
Oology	1861-Present	210	Blown eggs
Ornithology	1861-Present	1150	Taxidermy, study skins, skeletal
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1861-Present	717	Fossils, casts

## **Cape Cod Museum of Natural History - Brewster, MA**

Contact: Kate Roderick (kroderick@ccmnh.org)

The Cape Cod Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Archaeology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Archives/ Library	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1921-Present	Unknown	Extensive collection of herbarium sheets
Entomology/ Arachnology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Herpetology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Ichthyology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Malacology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Mammalogy	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Mineralogy/ Geology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Oology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Ornithology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided
Art	1921-Present	Unknown	Not provided

**College of the Holy Cross - Worcester, MA**Contact: Leon Claessens ([lclaesse@holycross.edu](mailto:lclaesse@holycross.edu))

Holy Cross has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1901-1960	Unknown	Uncataloged
Herpetology	1901-1960	29	Reptile and amphibian taxidermy mounts
Ichthyology	1901-1960	14	Taxidermy and casts
Malacology	1901-1960	Unknown	Uncataloged
Mammalogy	1901-1960	68	Taxidermy
Mineralogy/ Geology	1901-1960	1,000	Rocks and minerals
Oology	1901-1960	100	Eggs
Ornithology	1901-1960	187	Taxidermy
Marine Invertebrates	1901-1960	40	Mounted corals, etc.
Anatomy (Teaching)	1901-1960	250	
Special Collections	The collections include several rare and endangered species, with some taxidermy dating back to the late 19 <sup>th</sup> century.		

## **EcoTarium - Worcester, MA**

Contact: Shana Hawrylchak (shawrylchak@ecotarium.org)

The EcoTarium has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1861-Present	2,980 (with Archeology)	Tools, models, baskets, garments, dolls, jewelry
Archaeology	1861-1960	2,980 (with Anthropology)	Lithics, pottery, metal fragments
Archives/ Library	1825-Present	Unknown	Natural history books, journals and logs, scrapbooks, photographs
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1870-1920	1,321	Herbarium sheets, dried 3D specimens, dendrology slices, seeds, wax mushrooms
Entomology/ Arachnology	1870-1960	2,409	Pinned specimens, riker mounts, fluid preserved specimens, resin enclosed mounts
Herpetology	1870-1960	92	Full and partial mounts, skeletons, skins, fluid preserved specimens, resin enclosed mounts
Ichthyology	1870-1920	53	Fluid preserved specimens, full mounts, full partial skeletons
Malacology	1870-1960	11,170	Shells, fluid preserved specimens
Mammalogy	1870-1960	435	Full and partial mounts, fluid preserved specimens, study skins, pelts, full and partial skeletons and skeletal material
Mineralogy/ Geology	1870-Present	21,602	Rocks and mineral (polished and unpolished)
Oology	1870-1920	4,898	Blown eggs, nests, dioramas
Ornithology	1870-1920	2,903	Full mounts, study skins, full and partial skeletons, dioramas, feathers

Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1970-1960	1,129	Fossils
Technology, Historic	1870-1960	139	Framed art, historic machines, historic tools, dioramas, microscopes
Marine Invertebrates	1870-1960	150	Dried specimens, fluid preserved specimens
Special Collections	Goddard Mineral Collection Thayer Bird Collection – Birds mounts (study skins at Harvard)		

**Edna Lawrence Nature Lab – Providence, RI**

Contact: Katy Dika and Rachel Atlas (nature@risd.edu)

The Nature Lab has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Archives/ Library	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Not provided
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Antique herbarium sheets
Entomology/ Arachnology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Fluid preserved specimens
Herpetology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Not provided
Ichthyology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Not provided
Malacology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Shells
Mammalogy	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Taxidermy, osteology, pelts, study skins, human skeletons, other skeletal
Mineralogy/ Geology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Rocks and minerals
Oology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Not provided
Ornithology	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Taxidermy, study skins
Marine Invertebrate	1921-1940	Total: 80,000-100,000	Corals, sponges, echinoderms, crustaceans
Special Collections	Live animals (aquaria, reptiles, mammals) Microscopy		

## L.C. Bates Museum – Hinkley, ME

Contact: Deb Staber ([dstaber@gwh.org](mailto:dstaber@gwh.org))

The L.C. Bates Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1840-1950	3,000	Cultural materials, ceramics, jewelry, more
Archaeology	Pre-Columbian, Maine Prehistory	50,000	Stone tools
Archives/ Library	1840-1950	80,000	Institutional history, archives, natural history library, maps, photographs
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1840-1950	500	Pressed plants, tree trunk/bark, seeds
Entomology/ Arachnology	1840-1950	800+	Mounted insects
Herpetology	1840-1950	400	Mounts, skins
Ichthyology	1840-1950	45	Mounts, skeletal
Malacology	1840-1950	4,000+	Shells
Mammalogy	1840-1950	874	Full mounts, head mounts, skulls, skins
Mineralogy/ Geology	1840-1950	6,000	Rocks and minerals
Oology	1840-1950	500	Eggs
Ornithology	1840-1950	3,000	Mounts, dioramas, some study skins
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1840-1950	750	Fossils
Technology, Historic	1840-1950	480	Printing presses, horse drawn vehicles, fire wagon, wood working, household and farm tools
Marine Invertebrates	1840-1950	350	Corals and sponges from Gulf of Mexico and Pacific coast of S. America
Art	1840-1950	400	Paintings, prints, photographs, lantern slides, portraits
Special Collections	Dioramas – Maine habitats with Charles D. Hubbard backgrounds Blue Marlin – Caught by Ernest Hemmingway		

**Maria Mitchell Association - Nantucket, MA**

Contact: Andrew McKenna-Foster (amckennafoster@mariamitchell.org)

The Maria Mitchell Association has collections from New England.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1881-1900	4,500	Pressed plants
Entomology/ Arachnology	1921-Present	3,000	Pinned insects, other invertebrates in ethanol
Herpetology	Present	33	Skeletons, fluid (ethanol) preserved specimens
Ichthyology	1941-Present	105	Fluid (ethanol) preserved specimens
Malacology	1941-Present	500	Shells
Mammalogy	1941-Present	80	Study skins, skeletons, other skeletal
Oology	1941-Present	39	Eggs
Ornithology	1941-Present	1,400	Study skins, mounts, some skeletal
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1901-1920	46	Subfossil shells

**Montshire Museum of Science- Norwich, VT**

Contact: Bob Raiselis (bob.raiselis@montshire.org)

The Montshire Museum has collections from North America with a focus on New England.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Entomology/ Arachnology	1901-1960	<10,000	Pinned specimens, former personal collection
Herpetology	1901-1960	<100	Taxidermy
Mammalogy	1901-1960	<100	Taxidermy
Mineralogy/ Geology	1901-1960	<250	Minerals
Oology	1901-1960	<500 (with Ornithology)	Eggs, nests
Ornithology	1901-1960	<500 (with Oology)	Taxidermy, feathers

## Museum of Natural History and Planetarium – Providence, RI

Contact: Michael Kieron ([m.kieron@musnathist.com](mailto:m.kieron@musnathist.com))

The Museum of Natural History has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1881-1920	4,400	Not Provided
Archaeology	1881-1920	20,000	Not Provided
Archives/ Library	1881-1920	30,000	Negative, prints, slides
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1881-1920	11,000	Not Provided
Entomology/ Arachnology	1881-1920	70,000	Not Provided
Herpetology	1881-1920	200 (with Ichthology)	Not Provided
Ichthyology	1881-1920	200 (with Herpatology)	Not Provided
Malacology	1881-1920	80,000	Not Provided
Mammalogy	1881-1920	500	Not Provided
Mineralogy/ Geology	1881-1920	12,000	Not Provided
Oology	1881-1920	1,000	Eggs, nests
Ornithology	1881-1920	5,600	Not Provided
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1881-1920	10,000	Not Provided
Technology, Historic	1881-1920	50	Not Provided
Marine Invertebrates	1881-1920	400	Not Provided
Special Collections	Other unspecified collections – 2,500 objects The Manly Hardy bird collection		

## Natural History Collections at UMass Amherst - Amherst, MA

Contact: Kate Doyle (kdoyle@bio.umass.edu)

The Natural History Collections at UMass Amherst have collections objects from all over the world but are primarily focused on Massachusetts.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1861-Present	242,000	Herbarium mounts, some living plants
Entomology/ Arachnology	1861-Present	100,000	Mounted specimens, fluid preserved specimens
Herpetology	1861-Present	12,000	Skeletons, fluid preserved specimens, a few skins
Ichthyology	1861-Prsent	38,000	Fluid preserved specimens, skeletons
Mammalogy	1861-Present	6,000	Study skins, skeletons, fluid preserved specimens, some mounts
Oology	1861-Present	Not provided	Not Provided
Ornithology	1861-Present	5,000	Study skins, skeletons, fluid preserved specimens, some mounts
Special Collections	Mounts from Cabinet of Natural History of the Boston State House Specimens from Massachusetts Herp Atlas (1990s)		

**Perkins Museum of Geology – Burlington, VT**

Contact: Robin Hopps (geology@uvm.edu)

Survey prepared by UVM Department of Geology

The Perkins Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Archaeology	1820 or earlier	Unknown	Not Provided
Archives/ Library	Not Provided	Unknown	Not Provided
Ichthyology	Not Provided	Unknown	Not Provided
Malacology	Not Provided	Unknown	Fluid preserved specimens
Mineralogy/ Geology/ Geology	1820 or earlier	Unknown	Gems, minerals
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1820 or earlier	Unknown	Fossils, trace fossils, casts
Special Collections			Life-sized hologram of T. rex skull “Charlotte Whale” – Vermont State fossil Vermont State Bedrock map Oldest fossil reef exhibit – samples from Chazy Reef

## **Southern Vermont Natural History Museum – Marlboro, VT**

Contact: Michael Clough (vermontmuseum@gmail.com)

The Southern Vermont Natural History Museum has collections from North England and the Mid-Atlantic.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1921-1940, 1981-Present	55	Local plants
Entomology/ Arachnology	1921-1940, 1981-Present	Not Provided	Not Provided
Herpetology	1921-1940, 1981-Present	14	Live reptiles and amphibians
Mammalogy	1921-1940, 1981-Present	50	Taxidermy
Mineralogy/ Geology	1921-1940, 1981-Present	143	Rocks and minerals
Oology	1921-1940, 1981-Present	600 (with Ornithology)	Eggs, nests
Ornithology	1921-1940, 1981-Present	600 (with Ornithology)	Taxidermy, 11 live birds
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1921-1940, 1981-Present	31	Fossils
Special Collections	Taxidermy collection by Luman Ranger Nelson, including 3 extinct birds		

## Springfield Science Museum – Springfield, MA

Contact: Dave Stier ([dstier@springfieldmuseums.org](mailto:dstier@springfieldmuseums.org))

The Springfield Science Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. The collections contain a total of ~200,000 objects.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1820-Present	2,500	Objects, pottery
Archaeology	1820-Present	90,000	Lithics
Archives/ Library	1820-Present	1,500 (with Historic Technology)	Aviation (Gee Bee), planetarium (Korkosz)
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1820-Present	23,000+	Herbarium specimens, seeds, wax mushrooms
Entomology/ Arachnology	1820-Present	Not Provided	Dry mounts
Herpetology	1820-Present	Not Provided	Full mounts, fluid preserved specimens, skeletal material
Ichthyology	1820-Present	Not Provided	Full mounts, fluid preserved specimens, skeletal material
Malacology	1820-Present	20,000	Shells
Mammalogy	1820-Present	Not Provided	Full mounts, study skins, skeletal material
Mineralogy/ Geology	1820-Present	10,000	Rocks and minerals
Oology	1820-Present	6,000 (with Ornithology)	Bird eggs, nests
Ornithology	1820-Present	6,000 (with Oology)	Full mounts, study skins, type specimens, extinct specimens
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1820-Present	5,000	Fossil vertebrates and invertebrates, fossil footprints trace fossils
Technology, Historic	1820-Present	1,500 (with Archives/Library)	Aviation, planetarium, medical
Live Animal	Not Provided	Not Provided	Not Provided
Special Collections	Luman Andrews Herbarium Jonathan Dwight N.A. Bird Collection Zinn Mineral Collection Schortmann Mineral Collection		

Oleson Hawaiian Tree Snail Collection  
John Bonn Bird and Butterfly Collection  
McCormick Indo-Pacific Butterfly Collection  
Dimmock Insect Collection  
Dr. Ernest Driver Vertebrate Skull Collection  
Frank Perret Volcanology Archive and Collection  
J.T. Bowne Archaeology Collection  
Barker Day Keith Archaeology Collection  
W.S. Fowler Archaeology Collection  
Philip Kilroy Archaeology Collection  
Walter Rodiman Archaeology Collection  
Joseph Craig Archaeology Collection  
Nathan D. Bill Basketry Collection  
Gee Bee Aviation Archive and Collection  
Frank D. Korkosz Archive and Collection  
Smithsonian/Sears Cast Iron Toy Collection

## **Stamford Museum and Nature Center – Stamford, CT**

Contact: Kirsten R. Brophy (kbrophy@stamfordmuseum.org)

The Stamford Museum has collections from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1841-1920	750	Native American & pre-Columbian
Archaeology	1900-1950	2,400	Lithics
Archives/ Library	1900-1940	100	Books on nature
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	Not Provided	50	Woodland ferns
Entomology/ Arachnology	1901-1940	2,800	Butterfly and moth Riker mounts, Pinned beetle specimens
Herpetology	Not Provided	21	Snake and alligator skins, full turtles and alligators
Ichthyology	Not Provided	8	Fish mounts, skeletons
Mammalogy	1901-1940	78+	Head mounts, full mounts, skeletal materials
Mineralogy/ Geology	1881-1940	4,750	Rocks and minerals (local and international)
Oology	1881-1940	1,700	Eggs, nests (local and international)
Ornithology	1881-1940	1050	Mounts, study skins
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1900-1950	1,000	Fossil invertebrates, ferns, Merycoidodon, Pleistocene mammals & petrified wood, CT River Valley footprints
Special Collections	Louis H Porter Study Skin Collection - 684 study skins representing approx. 200 species		

## **The Little Nature Museum – Warner, NH**

Contact: Sandy Martin ([info@littlenaturemuseum.org](mailto:info@littlenaturemuseum.org))

The Little Nature Museum has collections from North America and Africa.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Plant galls, cones, wood samples, lichens, fungi
Entomology/ Arachnology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Insects and arachnids
Herpetology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Not Provided
Malacology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Shells
Mammalogy	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Mounts, pelts
Mineralogy/ Geology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Rocks and minerals, sands
Oology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Bird eggs
Ornithology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Mounts, study skins
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Fossils
Marine Invertebrates	1820 or earlier, 1881-Present	Unknown	Sponges
Special Collections	Collection of birds' eggs from the late 1800's.		

## **The Nature Museum at Grafton – Grafton, VT**

Contact: Carrie Roy King (carrie@nature-museum.org)

The Nature Museum has collections from North America, South America, and Australia.

<b>Collections Categories</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number of Objects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Anthropology/ Ethnology	1841-Present	50	Abenaki Native American pieces
Archaeology	1841-Present	50	Arrow heads, axe pieces, and spear tips
Botany/ Herbaria/ Mycology/ Mycology	1841-Present	100	Seeds and cones
Entomology/ Arachnology	1841-Present	15	Insects in plexiglass
Herpetology	1841-Present	20	Specimens in plexiglass
Ichthyology	1841-Present	3	Fluid preserved specimens
Malacology	1841-Present	15	Shells, fluid preserved specimens
Mammalogy	1841-Present	178	Mounts, skins, furs, pelts, skeletal materials
Mineralogy/ Geology	1841-Present	500	Rocks and minerals (Vermont and international)
Oology	1841-Present	43	Eggs, nests
Ornithology	1841-Present	436	Mounts, skeletal materials, feathers
Paleontology/ Paleobiology	1841-Present	30	Fossils, amber
Special Collections	Fiji Mermaid 1800's dueling frogs Victorian bird taxidermy case with passenger pigeon Victorian case with bird eggs		

**How many paid staff persons are dedicated to collections work at your museum?**

Half of the respondents (9 of 18) reported 0 paid staff persons dedicated to collections work. The other half of respondents had 1-3 paid collections staff persons (9 of 18).

**How many paid staff persons sometimes work with collections at your museum?**

Most respondents (16 of 18) had 0-4 paid staff persons that sometimes work with collections. One respondent reported ~10 staff persons working part time in collections and one respondent had a large student staff of 30-35 persons working part time in collections.

**How many volunteers work with collections at your museum?**

Four respondents did not have a volunteer program. Of the remaining 14 respondents, ten had 1-6 volunteers, three had 10-15 volunteers, and one had almost 50 volunteers working in collections.

**How would you rate your collections volunteer program overall? Very strong, strong, average, weak, or very weak?**

More than half of the respondents (10 of 18) rated their volunteer program as non-existent, very weak, or weak. The other half of the respondents rated their volunteer programs as average or strong. No respondents reported a very strong volunteer program.

**What are the strengths of your collections volunteer program?**

Of the institutions with volunteer programs, many respondents described the strengths of the volunteers in their program, calling them highly knowledgeable, well-trained, enthusiastic, responsible, and disciplined. Some respondents described long-term volunteer relationships, which sometimes included students and alumni of a related institution or volunteers that started as young teens. Other respondents described the various roles that collections volunteers have in their program and cross-training in museum programming and curation.

**What are the weaknesses of your collections volunteer program?**

Of the institutions with volunteer programs, several respondents described problems related to the expansion and management of their volunteer program, including lack of staff, lack of infrastructure, lack of time to manage and train volunteers, lack of work for inexperienced volunteers, and poor volunteer training. Others mentioned issues with the volunteers themselves, such as lack of volunteers, lack of basic computer skills, short-term volunteers, and unreliable volunteers.

**Do you feel like your staff and/or volunteers are adequately knowledgeable and trained to identify, inventory, and care for your collection?**

More than half of the respondents (10 of 18) do feel like their volunteers and staff are adequately trained for collections work. Other respondents felt that all or part of their volunteers and staff needed more training or were required to engage in self-teaching in response to requirements. Some of the respondents (6 of 18) mentioned that volunteers and/or staff were only trained in limited topics/duties and were not prepared for all collections responsibilities.

**What is the biggest obstacle you have faced in processing your collection?**

The most common response to this question was lack of staff or volunteers (8 of 18). Other obstacles commonly discussed were the condition and organization of records, the lack of time and/or space, the lack of funding, the lack of consistency of students and volunteers, and the lack of expertise and identification skills.

**What is the biggest obstacle you have for housing your collection?**

Almost all of the respondents mentioned space as their biggest obstacle (16 of 18). Other obstacles commonly discussed were the lack of time, the lack of organization, and the condition and maintenance of facilities (including pest management, climate control, and outdated cabinetry, storage, and exhibit housing).

**What are the biggest obstacles you have for using collections in exhibits, loans, or programs?**

The most commonly mentioned obstacles for using collections were regarding the safety and fragility of collections, including hazardous preservation techniques, object handling and wear, object theft, quarantine space, and proper display cases. Other obstacles included lack of time, funding, and staff, lack of original records, inventories, photographs, and loan information, low visibility, and problematic object histories.

**Approximately what percent of your museum's natural history collection has been inventoried within the last 5 years?**

Respondents reported a wide variety of inventorying in the last five years. More than half of the respondents inventoried between 0% and 50% of their collection in the last five years (11 of 18). The remaining 7 respondents reported inventorying 51% to 100% of their collection in the past five years.

**Are you satisfied with your museum's inventory procedures or would you be interested in learning other ways to inventory?**

Most respondents are willing to learn other ways to inventory (13 of 18). Three respondents are satisfied with their inventory procedures and two respondents would be willing to learn but lack the time.

**What barriers have you encountered to inventorying your museum’s collection?**

The responses to this question are summarized below:

Lack of staff time	18 of 18
Lack of staff training	8 of 18
Missing or unorganized documentation	18 of 18
Lack of money	13 of 18
Institutional past practice	12 of 18
Lack of standardized procedures	12 of 18
Low priority of the institution	10 of 18
Database needs	8 of 18
Other	Lack of staff (3 of 18)

**To what extent have you used the following resources to aid you in inventorying your museum’s collection? Please rate each resource on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being a source you have never used, and 5 being your primary source of information.**

The average response to each resource is shown below:

Colleagues	4.2
Webinars or other virtual learning tools	2.0
Workshops, conference sessions, or other in-person learning opportunities	2.0
College or graduate school classes	2.1
Books or other published materials	3.5
Online articles or journals	3.6
Other	Outside collections specialists Self-teaching Student employees

**What database do you use to keep track of the collections at your museum?**

The most commonly used collections tracking software was Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (8 of 18). Several respondents reported being in the process of transitioning from Excel spreadsheets to dedicated database software. Other software used included PastPerfect (7 of 18), Re:discovery/Proficio (2 of 18), FileMaker Pro (1 of 18), Specify (2 of 18), and Digital Archive (1 of 18).

**Are you satisfied with the ways the database you use meets the needs of your museum, regarding size of collection, type of collection, cost, etc?**

Most respondents are satisfied with their database (11 of 18). Other respondents needed database updates, tech support, or maintenance or wanted a new database but were limited by database knowledge, requirements, or cost.

**Approximately what percentage of the collection is searchable via the database system?**

Respondents reported a wide variety of collections percentages that are searchable. Most of the respondents have between 50% and 100% of their collection searchable in their database (11 of 18). One respondent has 30% of their collection that is searchable. The remaining 6 respondents reported that between 0% and 20% of their collection is searchable in their database.

**What is the primary reason your organization holds its collection?**

Most respondents reported multiple reasons for holding their collection:

Exhibitions	13 of 18
Programs	9 of 18
Research	7 of 18
Other	Stewardship (1 of 18) Institutional/local history (2 of 18) Education (7 of 18)

**Does your organization feature its collections online? If so, how? If yes, how much is searchable online?**

Most respondents do not feature their collections online currently (13 of 18). Four other respondents have limited online access to collections records featuring particular collections or a subset of each collection. One respondent has digital archives with 70% of the collection searchable online.

**Approximately what percentage of your collection is on exhibit?**

Most respondents have less than 15% of their collection on exhibit (13 of 17). Three remaining respondents reported 40%, 75-80%, and 95% of collection on exhibit. One

respondent did not know the percentage of their collection on exhibit. One respondent does not use the collections in exhibits at all.

**Approximately how often are collections pieces used in programming?**

Most respondents reported using collections pieces daily, weekly, or monthly in public programming, classes, and guided tours. Several institutions rarely use collections pieces because their programs use a dedicated education collection that is separate from the permanent collection.

**Does your museum offer visitors a behind the scenes look into collections care? If so, how?**

More than half of the respondents do not offer behind the scenes looks at collections care (11 of 18). Several others reported offering behind the scenes tours infrequently by request, for workshops and trainings, or for their annual open house. Two respondents reported frequent collections tours in programming or by appointment all year. One respondent has an exhibit designed to educate visitors on collecting and collections care.

**How frequently do researchers access your collection?**

There was a wide variety of levels of researcher access among respondents. About a third of the respondents (6 of 18) have collections researchers never or infrequently. Another third have researchers in the collections yearly or several times a year. The remaining third of the respondents have frequent research, often by students or in-house curators, on a monthly to weekly timescale.

**How do researchers find out what is in your collection?**

The most common reported source of information for researchers was inquiry by email or phone (10 of 18). Other reported sources of information were word of mouth, colleagues, social media, online lists and list-serves, articles, and books. One respondent reported few to no outside researchers accessing the collection.

**What types of potential partnerships might be of help to your institution in the future?**

The responses to this question are summarized below:

Joint training sessions with hired specialists	13 of 18
Materials purchasing / Surplus materials collaborative	13 of 18
Loan networks	9 of 18
Joint grants for resources	14 of 18
Other	Joint grants for staffing (1 of 18)

**Do you feel there is an unmet need and would you be interested in joining a professional group for natural history museums in the region, such as a NEMA PAG?**

Most respondents were willing to consider joining NEMA or were already members (14 of 18). Some respondents were open to exploring new options but felt that NEMA in particular did not meet their needs as a museum (not enough Natural History focus, not as appropriate for zoos or science centers). Some respondents also mentioned their membership in other groups, such as ASTC, AAM, and Smithsonian Affiliations. Some respondents mentioned a time limitation in participating in such a group.