

Collections Access Policy

Department of Paleontology

San Diego Natural History Museum

I. Introduction

The San Diego Natural History Museum (SDNHM) is run and operated by the San Diego Society of Natural History (SDSNH), which was incorporated in 1874 as the oldest scientific organization in southern California. Within the Museum the Department of Paleontology welcomes scholarly and educational use of the collections in its care. The following guidelines for researchers have been developed to facilitate the study of the collections while ensuring the preservation of the archived specimens/objects for future generations of scholars and students. Anyone not adhering to these guidelines may be asked to leave the Museum's storage and study areas, and may lose future collection visitation privileges. Any variations from these guidelines must be obtained in writing in advance from the Curator of Paleontology (Curator).

II. Initial Inquiry & Research Request

Access to the paleontological collections is granted to researchers with clear research goals and institutional affiliations for legitimate research and educational purposes only. Exceptions to this requirement will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Researchers interested in accessing the collections should contact the Curator or Collections Manager of Fossil Vertebrates (Collections Manager). After initial inquiry, the researcher must submit a written Research Request to the Curator prior to conducting research. This submittal provides a record for tracking research conducted on the collections and is a formal means for SDNHM to assess the appropriate use of the collections.

All collection Research Requests should include the following information:

- Proposed date(s) for the research visit;
- A description of the research to be conducted using SDSNH specimens/objects (including questions addressed by the research, proposed methods of data collection, and hypotheses to be tested);
- CVs of all members of the visiting research group;
- A list of SDSNH specimens/objects to be examined (if known), including specimen numbers or taxonomic group(s);
- A description of any Museum-supplied analytical equipment needed during the visit or special requests;
- A statement regarding whether or not the researcher anticipates the need to borrow SDSNH paleontological specimens/objects.

Research Requests should be received at least 4 weeks prior to the expected visit. Visits scheduled on shorter notice and unscheduled visits will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on availability of staff and space. Research must be conducted between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5 PM Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

III. Care and Preservation

It is the responsibility of all researchers to ensure that preservation of archived specimens/objects is of primary concern during use of the collections. The researcher agrees to observe access and security regulations relating to the use of SDSNH collections and study areas and must follow all instructions from Museum staff. At the discretion of the Curator and depending upon the type, quantity, fragility, and rarity of the specimens/objects to be studied, some or all of the following conditions may apply:

- Researchers must carry Visitor Badges at all times.
- Researchers must comply with all emergency procedures, including the evacuation of the Museum building in the event of fire, fire drills, or earthquakes.
- Any necessary bags or other possessions taken into the collections storage and study areas are subject to examination at the end of the workday.
- Eating, drinking, smoking, and chewing gum is not permitted in the collections storage and study areas.
- Researchers are responsible for supplying their own equipment (e.g. cameras, plastic measuring devices, calipers, magnifying loupes, etc.).
- For measuring specimens/objects, the use of cloth tape measures is preferred. Please ask Museum Staff before using metal or plastic measuring devices.
- Researchers may handle specimens/ objects only with the permission of Museum staff.
- Some specimens (heavy, rare, delicate, etc.) may require that only Museum staff move them to and from collections storage equipment (e.g. storage drawers, cabinets, shelves, etc.).
- For both the safety of the specimen/object and the researcher, archival linen gloves or disposable Nitrile and Latex gloves may be required when handling certain specimens/objects.
- Specimen/object testing (material analysis) and replicating (rubblings, impressions, and casts) is not permitted unless arranged for in advance of the research visit.
- Any damage or breakage to a specimen/object must be immediately reported to a department staff member.
- At the end of the research visit, researchers may be asked to provide to the Curator a complete list of all specimen/objects examined.

IV. Specimens/Objects on Exhibit

The Department of Paleontology will consider requests to remove specimens/objects from the exhibition halls in special circumstances. Advance notice is ideal.

V. Photography/Imaging

Photographs of archived specimens/objects may be taken for non-profit, educational, or research purposes. Permission to publish photos of specimens/objects must be arranged by separate agreement with the Curator, and may involve assignment of copyright to these photographs to SDNHM. The photographs may only be used for research purposes (including public presentations) and are not eligible for further reproduction, distribution, or publication.

Permission must be granted for any three-dimensional imagery taken of specimens/objects, and is given under the understanding that imagery will be shared with the Department of Paleontology. This type of imagery includes (but is not limited to) photogrammetry, 3D surface scanning, and computed tomography.

VI. Destructive Sampling

Requests for destructive sampling (e.g., radiometric dating, stable isotope analysis, microstructure analysis, etc.) of specimens/objects from the collections will be evaluated by the Curator and Collections Manager on a case-by-case basis. Such requests should be made in writing well ahead of any planned visit to the Museum, and should include sufficient detail concerning research goals, sampling methods, and estimated degree of destruction.

VII. Publication and Documentation

The researcher agrees to inform SDNHM if research based on SDSNH collections is to be published. The researcher agrees to provide SDNHM with a copy of any materials produced that are derived in part or whole from research conducted at SDNHM, including any materials which are produced in fulfillment of educational requirements, or which are published for commercial purposes.

VIII. Credit Line

For exhibition and publication, each specimen/object (SDSNH specimen numbers and other identifiers) shall be credited to the San Diego Natural History Museum unless otherwise indicated.

IX. Students

Students are subject to the same collections access policies and procedures as other researchers. Research requests from students must be accompanied by a letter of support from the student's advisor.