People in Collections

The long-term care and enduring value of biological collections depend on the continuous maintenance and support of collections professionals, whose specialized skills sustain and preserve the collections themselves while also making their vast stores of information accessible for scientific research and discovery. Collections professionals are a remarkably diverse community of individuals who bring many different kinds of expertise to the care, growth, use, and accessibility of biological collections. Together, they hold knowledge developed over decades, and in some cases centuries, about particular collections, specimens, methods, and practices. That knowledge extends beyond individual institutions through broader communities of collections professionals who share expertise, develop standards, and establish best practices for the field. Because biological collections encompass an extraordinary diversity of organisms, materials, preservation methods, and research uses, their long-term stewardship and scientific value depend on an equally broad range of skills, experience, and specialized knowledge.

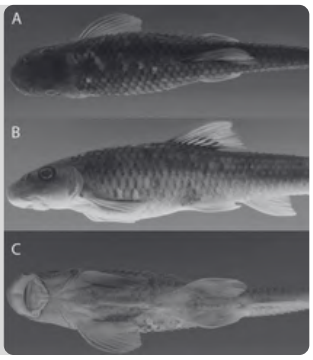
Defining Roles in Collections

Curators – Oversee scientific direction of collections and drive research within their taxonomic or disciplinary specialty.
Librarian – Manage archival and reference materials supporting research and institutional history.
Scientific Illustrator – Create precise visual representations of specimens for publication and education.
Collections Managers/Lab Managers – Manage day-to-day care, organization, and accessibility of specimens or lab operations.
Collections Assistants/Museum Specialists/ Museum Technicians – Support collections managers with specimen prep, cataloging, and routine maintenance tasks.
Interns – Gain hands-on training while assisting with short-term collections or research projects.
Researchers – Conduct scientific studies using museum specimens, data, or facilities.
Volunteers – Contribute unpaid time to collections, research, or public-facing projects.
Education and Outreach – Develop public programs and materials that connect museum science to broader audiences.
Directors – Set institutional vision and oversee overall museum operations and strategy.
Conservator – Preserve and stabilize specimens or artifacts museum collections to prevent deterioration.
Registrar – Track legal ownership, loans, and movement of specimens and objects.
Digital Asset Manager – Organize and maintain digital media files, metadata, and access systems.
Biodiversity Informaticists – Manage and analyze biodiversity data to support research.
Imaging Technician – Capture high-quality images for research and digitization.
Database Administrator – Maintain the technical infrastructure of collections databases.

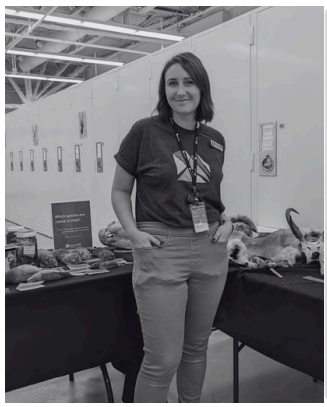


Collection Staff Highlights

Radford A. Arrindell
Sr. Museum Specialist; Icthyology
(American Museum of Natural History)



For over 40 years, Radford Arrindell has been working with marine specimens in museum collections, whether that be rehousing fossil fish specimens, or reorganizing extant fish species in a new collection space. He blames his love of fish to older sister, was skilled in fishing and the two were able to bond over that. His initial research interest in college was in mollusks and other invertebrates but an opportunity to work in the Fossil Fish department at AMNH soon after moving to New York City converted him over fully to the vertebrate side of sealife.



Katrina Derieg
Curator; Collection & Outreach Coordinator
(Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum)

As its only full-time employee, Katrina oversees the collection's growth, maintenance, and accessibility, setting priorities, pursuing funding, and running day-to-day operations from field collecting to loaning specimens. She was drawn in by the biodiversity on display in a single room, especially the diversity of desert rodents; growing up in the American Southwest, it was eye-opening to learn how many creatures live on the landscape around us. Her favorite part of the work is the organic discoveries it fosters — comparing skulls and finding unpublished distinguishing characters, or noticing that a species is now absent from a place it once lived.

Andrea (Andie) Carrillo
Preparator (Denver Museum of Nature & Science)



Andrea (Andie) prepares vertebrate skins, skeletons, and alcohol specimens in the DMNS Zoology Preparation Lab with her cohort of volunteers. Her main role is ensuring that the lab produces high-quality, stable specimens for long-term storage. She is also proudly the dermestid beetle caretaker. As a child,she always insisted on trips to natural history museums or zoos during any breaks from school. Andie was first introduced to preparation when she interned at the Museum of Wildlife and Fish Biology at UC Davis. She started as a mammal preparator and eventually developed a career in vertebrate preparation. Her favorite part of her job is getting close to the animals and knowing that her work will support science well into the future.



Jennifer Lobo
Lecturer, Artist, and Researcher
(Art Institute of Chicago and Field Museum)

Jennifer is a Research Associate in the Birds Division at the Field Museum of Natural History. Her position allows her the unique opportunity to use the extensive museum collections for research and reference for science-based art. She also teaches Scientific Illustration courses to students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago using museum specimens. She considers this the perfect amalgamation of a lifetime obsession with both nature and art. Jennifer states that the best part of her job is the access to rare and unusual species. The collections are an unending source of inspiration.

Collections are ESSENTIAL!

Citations

Additional One-Pagers

BCoN Website