Smithsonian Fellowships

The Smithsonian provides several fellowships through its Office of Fellowships and Internships (OFI) to enable graduate students, postdocs, and others to work at the NMNH and utilize the collection and facilities for research. The application deadline for each of the programs below is 1 November annually.

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3 – 24 month Predoctoral Fellowship: Ph.D. students who have fulfilled the requirements of candidacy (or its equivalent internationally) can spend up to 24 months at the NMNH (stipend of US $36,000 annually plus an annual research budget of US $4,000).

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Smithsonian Short-Term Visitor Program: This program is available for a scholarly visit to the NMNH for research or collaboration of up to 21 days (funding of US $2,000) or 30 days for scientists from developing regions of the world (funding of up to US $4,000). The application deadline is not fixed and submissions are welcome year round.

Further information and contacts

SI Department of Entomology naturalhistory.si.edu/research/entomology @SiEntomology
SEL www.sel.barc.usda.gov
WRBU www.wrbu.org
Diptera collection bit.ly/USNMDiptera
search Diptera collection collections.nmnh.si.edu/search/ento
SI Fellowship Office www.smithsonianofi.com

Contact the current research staff

SEL: Allen L. Norrbom Allen.Norrbom@ars.usda.gov
SI: Torsten Dikow DikowT@si.edu @TDikow #asiloidflies USNMdiptera
WRBU: Yvonne-Marie Linton LintonY@si.edu
NIS: Jung-Wook Kim Jung.W.Kim@aphis.usda.gov

Credits

Fly photographs by S. Marshall, illustration by T. Litwak, Williston photograph from Aldrich (1918), and Williston logo by B. Muller.

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Organization

The Diptera Collection at the Department of Entomology, National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, is one of the finest in the world. The official abbreviation for citing this museum as a repository is USNM (referring to the former United States National Museum).

The collection is administered by the Smithsonian Institution, but four separate U.S. government agencies provide research and curatorial staff, i.e., the Smithsonian (SI), the Systematic Entomology Laboratory (SEL) of the Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Identification Service (NIS) of the Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Walter Reed Biosystematic Unit (WRBU) of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, U.S. Department of Defense.

The four agencies have separate missions: SEL and NIS dipterists study primarily taxa of agricultural importance and provide identification services, WRBU dipterists focus on medically important taxa, and SI dipterists are open to choice of taxa for research.

The NIS, SI, and SEL dipterists and main collection are located at the NMNH in downtown Washington, DC. The WRBU dipterists and collection of medically important biting fly families as well as Chironomidae, Limoniidae, and Tipulidae are situated a few miles southeast of Washington, DC at the Museum Support Center (MSC).

The responsibilities for curation and loan requests are divided among the four agencies and a current list of the contact people to obtain a loan or other information can be found on the Department of Entomology website.

Collection

The collection comprises some 3,200,000 pinned specimens representing some 55,900 species, more than 600,000 slide-mounted specimens, and some 22,000 primary types. A genomic collection with currently more than 2,500 specimens preserved in liquid Nitrogen is growing steadily. Although there is material from all biogeographical regions, the New World is best represented. Of the 162 currently recognized families of Diptera (sensu Pape et al. 2011 + recently described) all but Heteromyzidae, Inbiomyiidae, Oreoleptidae, Ulurumyiidae, and Valeseguiyidae are represented. A species inventory will soon be available on our departmental website.

Acquisitions that greatly expanded the collection are those of C.P. Alexander (1,600,000, 1981), F.H. Arnaud, Jr. (700,000, 2000), A.L. Melander (250,000, 1961), J.N. Belkin (200,000, 1980), S.W. Bromley (35,000, 1955), A.E. Pritchard (27,000, 1962), J.P. Duret (14,000, 1990), and L.E. Rozeboom (12,000, 1998) as well as collections of C.H.T. Townsen (Oestroidea), R.H. Painter (Bombyliidae), and C.F. Baker (1928, Philippine Diptera).

Off-site Collections Enhancement Program

The USNM provides the opportunity for established curators at other natural history museums to take over the curatorial obligations of entire insect families at their home institution. For Diptera, the following families are part of the Off-site Collections Enhancement Program and are not housed at the NMNH: Bombyliidae and Mythicomyiidae at BPBM (N. Evenhuis), Pipunculidae at CNC (J. Skevington), and Celyphidae, Chamaemyiidae, and Lauxaniidae at CSCA (S. Gaimari). Please contact these colleagues for access to specimens.

Highlights of the collection

“Nematocera”: crane flies (Limoniidae and Tipulidae, coll. of C.P. Alexander), mosquitoes (Culicidae, collections of J.N. Belkin, J.P. Duret, L.E. Rozeboom, SEL dipterist A. Stone, WRBU dipterists), biting midges (Ceratopogonidae, SEL dipterist W.W. Wirth), and gall midges (Cecidomyiidae, SEL dipterist R.J. Gagné).