**LSU Museum of Natural Science**

**History**

The LSU Museum of Natural Science (LSU MNS) was founded in 1936 and the current public exhibit area was opened on March 27, 1955 in Foster Hall. The Museum’s founder and first Director, Dr. George H. Lowery, Jr., was a professor of zoology at LSU. The Museum of Natural Science is a research museum, meaning it educates the public through exhibits and programs, houses a premier research staff committed to learning more about our natural world, and maintains collections that support this work. Research at the Museum centers on the following disciplines: mammalogy (mammals), ornithology (birds), ichthyology (fishes), herpetology (reptiles and amphibians), paleontology (fossils), archaeology and anthropology (early human culture), genetic resources (genomics), palynology (pollen and particulate matter), and science education.

With holdings of almost 2.5 million specimens, the LSU Museum of Natural Science is among the nation’s leaders in terms of the size and diversity of its research collection. It houses the most active and third largest university-based collection of birds in the world and the largest collection of genetic resources (DNA samples) in the world. The museum’s nine faculty members have authored a combined total of more than 100 scholarly publications in the past five years, including several prestigious books, and have been awarded extramural grants totaling more than $3.7 million. As a result, the Museum is a powerful magnet for graduate students from throughout the world who come to study anthropology, archaeology, paleontology, and zoology at LSU. The Museum faculty currently advise twenty-six graduate students, and the Museum is among the top units on campus for success in placement of graduates.

The exhibit area highlights nine habitat dioramas that were constructed between the years of 1955-1964 by the talented scientist and artist, Ambrose Daigre. Habitat dioramas were popular forms of display in natural history museums beginning in the early 1900’s. They were intended to give the illusion of a real scene as being viewed through a window. The background of the diorama is constructed in the shape of a half dome to give the illusion of depth. It was Daigre’s job to blend the three dimensional foreground with the painted background to create a continuous natural scene.

In addition to the habitat dioramas, the Museum also has displays of the mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians of Louisiana, as well as the first Mike the Tiger. Fossil bones of a mastodon and a cast of the skull and foot of the dinosaur, Allosaurus, are also on display. Each year, about 3,500 visitors view the Museum’s exhibits and benefit from informative tours, social media and outreach programs.

**Mission Statement**

As the only comprehensive research museum in the south central United States, the LSU Museum of Natural Science supports a variety of scientific and educational roles, including:

1. generation of new knowledge in the STEM fields of biology, archaeology, and paleontology through scholarly research based primarily on natural history collections;
2. collection and preservation of research specimens as a resource for study of the Earth’s natural history (with an emphasis on Louisiana);
3. education of graduate and undergraduate students in academic areas that are most effectively taught in the museum setting;
4. education of the general public by means of exhibits and lecture programs;
5. assistance to local citizens, wildlife officials, and forensic specialists through identification and consultation services.

**Need in Community**

Museum collections have an increasingly critical role in documenting natural and cultural history in the face of globalization and habitat destruction. The LSU Museum of Natural Science receives substantial national and international recognition for the quality and activity of its collections. As the only comprehensive research museum in the south central United States, our presence is vital for the community. The LSU MNS education program is tailored to disseminate ongoing research performed by LSU MNS curators, graduate students, postdocs and staff, and the research conducted by faculty in the Biological Sciences, Geology & Geophysics, and Geography & Anthropology departments.