



## Palaeontology and Prehistory Collections

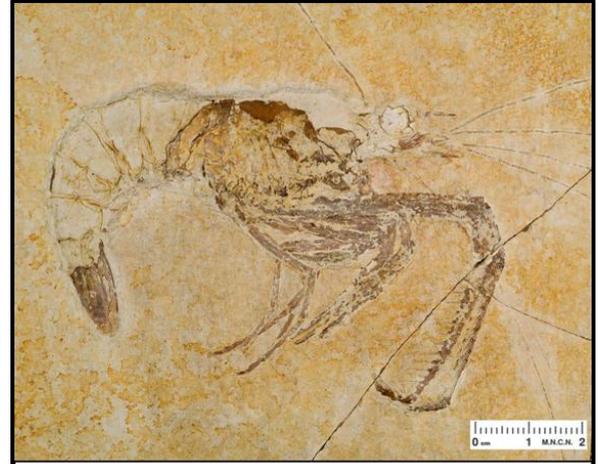
Palaeontology and Prehistory Collections are unique and very specialized services of CSIC, and the largest of Spain, whose function is to support research on Evolution of Life on Earth, and facilitate the transfer of this knowledge to society. They are part of the “Great European Union Facility”, because these collections are an important resource for studying the biology of animals, plants and humans, as well as a benchmark for systematic studies by scientists around the world. The specimens are fossils of plants and animals, as well as naturally occurring tracks, impressions, and casts. In addition, these collections include human-made moulds, and casts of specimens. The Palaeontology and Prehistory Collections at the Spanish National Museum of Natural Sciences (MNCN) are in the first place in size nationally with around 1 million specimens, who cover all geologic ages, and they are the most important collections of Spanish localities in the world.



*Colpocoryphe rouaulti* Henry, 1970  
Puerto de San Vicente, Cáceres, Spain  
Middle Ordovician. Llandeilo (c. 468 – 465 million years ago)  
Photo: Department of Photography. MNCN

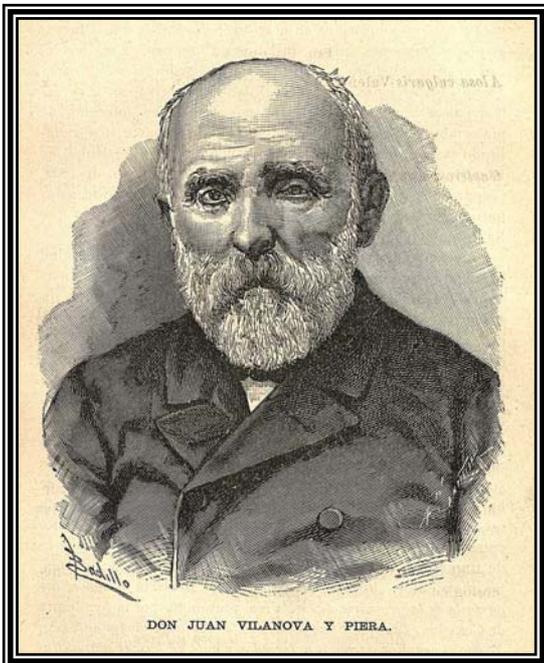


There are four major collections, because of their antiquity, nature and scientific importance: Invertebrates fossils, Palaeovertebrates, Paleobotany and Prehistory. Most groups of plants and animals are represented in these Collections, with 38.211 database records in the Invertebrate fossils collection (>200.000 specimens; >500 types and figured); 8.980 database records in the Paleobotany collection (13.196 specimens, 277 types or figured); near 64.000 database records in the Paleovertebrates collection (175.000 specimens, 103 types); and 14.916 database records in the Prehistory collection (21.477 specimens). Specimens vary considerably in size and weight, ranging from the massive, such as fossil *Megatherium americanum* skeleton and fossil tree trunks, to small micro-mammals teeth or the microscopic diatoms.



*Aeger tipularius* (Schlotheim, 1822)  
Solnhofen, Germany

Upper Jurassic. Tithonian (c. 151 - 146 Mya)  
Photo: Department of Photography. MNCN



Although Palaeontology collections are strongest for Spanish localities, there are also specimens or replicas from Solnhofen and Oehningen (Germany), Lyme Regis (United Kingdom), Soulz-les Bains and Autun (France), Perm (Russia), Burgess Pass and Newfoundland (Canada), and Black Hills (United States), coming from donations, collectings, buyings or interchanges carried out since the middle of the XIXth century. Some specimens come from scientists, who were the fore of developing of geology and palaeontology as sciences in Spain: Juan Vilanova y Piera, Augusto González de Linares, Casiano de Prado, Eduardo Hernández Pacheco, Bermudo Meléndez Meléndez, José Royo-Gómez, Federico Gómez-Llueca or Josefa Menénez Amor, and are mentioned in scientific papers since the XIXth century to the present day. Therefore, it is also an

important reference collection for taxonomic and systematic research of extinct groups.



*Marrella splendens* Walcott, 1912  
Burgess Pass, Canadá  
Middle Cambrian (c. 510 - 505 million years)  
Photo: Department of Photography. MNCN

MNCN is member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). According with its Code of ethics for Museums, the Museums hold collections for the benefit of society and its development. Thus the Palaeontology and Prehistory Collections are being managed and conserved to ensure its preservation for present and future generations, as well as to maximize their access with scientific, intellectual and cultural purposes, and nowadays are considered non-profit services of the museum.

The Palaeontology collections are included in Synthesys, an "integrated infrastructure initiative" by CETAF (Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities), supported by the European Union, for facilitating and supporting access to natural history collections by European researchers. Accessing the collection with research purposes is also allowed to all accredited researchers from around the world upon request (<http://www.synthesys.info/>). Eligible Countries are the following: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark (including Greenland), Estonia, Finland, France (including Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, La Réunion), Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom. Plus the Associated Countries of the EU: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Faroe Islands, FYR Macedonia, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey.



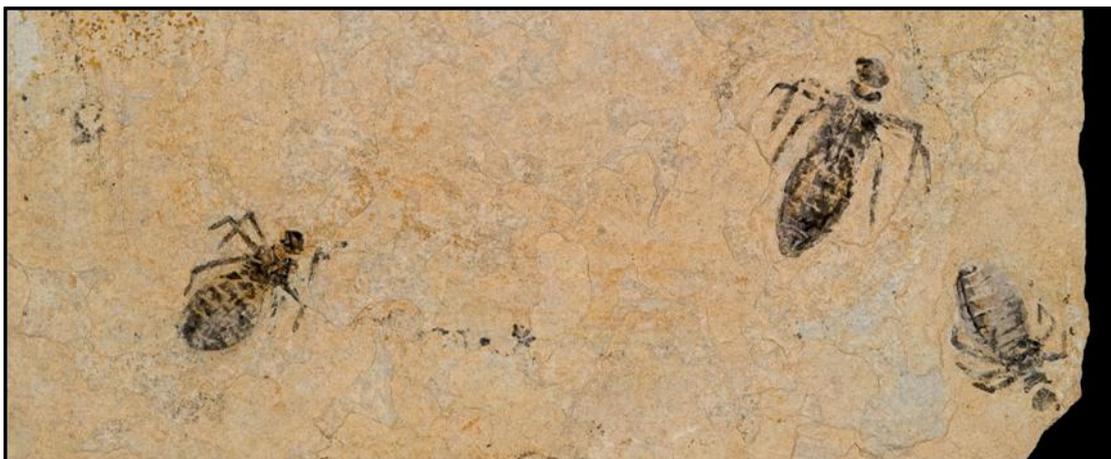


Staff is also in touch with research and exhibition departments in order to communicate science to the general public. In addition, specimens of Palaeontology and Prehistory Collections may be loaned to institutions with appropriate standards for their care and security, for exhibitions and other cultural and scientific events.



*Dictyoclostus semirreticulatus* (Martin, 1809)  
Perm, Russia  
Permian (c. 299 – 251 million years)  
Photo: Department of Photography. MNCN

Images of specimens can also be used for publications, CD-ROMs, press stories and documentary film, upon request and express permissions. Staff can also give advice and support in many different fields: collections preservation, collections management, bibliographic sources, fossils identification, legislation, etc.



*Oryctodiplax gypsorum* Cavallo & Galletti, 1987  
Santa Vittoria d'Alba, Italy  
Miocene. Messinian (c. 6 million years)  
Photo: Department of Photography. MNCN