United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
1100 OHIO DRIVE, S. W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242

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Memorandum

To: All Superintendents and Associate Regional Director, White House Liaison, National Capital Region

From: Regional Director, National Capital Region

Subject: Curatorial Bulletin #16-Natural History Collections

With the addition of 36 CFR, Section 2.5, on natural history collections, it is important that park personnel be aware of the regulations, the supplies needed to catalog natural history specimens, and the scope of natural history collections.

Enclosed are two handouts which will serve as a guideline for your park's collecting and recordkeeping of natural history specimens. The regulations have been forwarded to you under separate cover.

If you have any questions on this, please contact Regional Curator Pam West at 426-6770.

Robert Stanton

Enclosures

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF NPS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM LABELS

By : Jonathan Bayless
NPS, WASO

The following Museum specimen labels for NPS natural history collections are available from the Division of Museum Services, Harpers Ferry Center.

NPS FORM #	Label type	Height by width * (inches)
10-500	Vetebrate Wet Specimen Label	3 X 5
10-501	Vertebrate Specimen Label	$^{3}/_{4}$ X 3 $^{1}/_{4}$
10-502	Skull Vial or Box Label	$^{3}/_{4}$ X 2 $^{1}/_{2}$
10-503	Invertebrate Specimen Label	3 X 5
10-504	Geology Collection	3 X 2
10-505	Paleontology Label	2 $^{3}/_{4}$ X 4
10-506	Wet Plant Specimen Label	3 X 5
10-507	Invertebrate Label	1 $^{3}/_{4}$ X 2 $^{1}/_{2}$
10-508	Egg Box Label	1 $^{3}/_{4}$ X 2 $^{1}/_{2}$
10-509	Insect Label	$^{1}/_{2}$ X 1 $^{1}/_{2}$
10-510	Annotation Label	1 $^{1}/_{4}$ X 4
10-511	Mineral Collection	3 $^{1}/_{2}$ X 2
10-512	Herbarium Collection	3 X 5

* Dimensions important when considering box, jar, vial, or paper size to use with each label

TECHNIQUES

SPECIMEN ATTACHMENT: These labels are attached or associated with the specimens in the following manners. Note that some labels may be attached in more than one way. NEVER REMOVE OR DESTROY OLDER LABEL ; if prior label cannot be maintained on specimen (Damage or lack of space) put old label with Catolog file and note fact on new label.

GLUED on box jar paper	ENCLOSED in box jar vial
Vertebrate Wet Specimen Label	Skull Vial or Box Label
Skull Vial or Box Label	Geology Collection
Invertebrate Specimen Label	Paleontology Label
Geology Collection	Invertebrate Label
Paleontology Label	Egg Box Label
Wet Plant Specimen Label	Insect Label
Invertebrate label	Mineral Collection
Annotation label	
Mineral Collection	
Herbarium Collection	

TIED with string on Specimen	PINNED down
Vertebrate Specimen Label	Insect Label
Annotation Label	

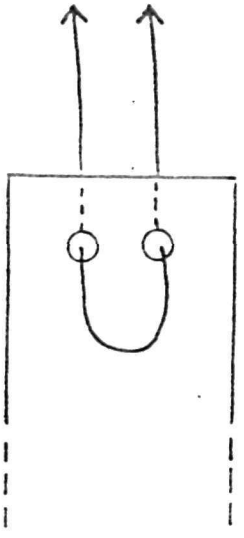
GLUE: A wide range of glues can be used to fix labels on jars and boxs. Avoid starchy paste type glues as they are more susceptible to mold and insect attack. Do not use "Model airplane" type glues with toluene or acetone bases.

UNIT OF LABELING: All labels are to be used for a single specimen with the following exceptions:

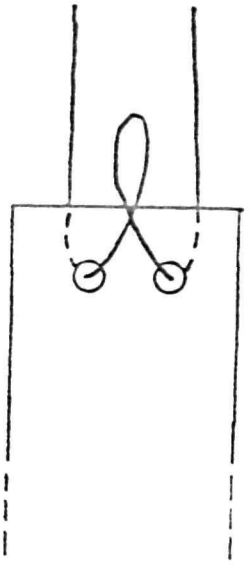
(1) VETEBRATE WET SPECIMEN LABEL (10-500), INVERTEBRATE SPECIMEN LABEL (10-503), and INVERTEBRATE LABEL (10-507) have a space for the number of specimens and can be used on jars containing specimens of the same species where all the specimens have the same collection data. The data must pertain to the same collecting locality, date of collection and collected by.

(2) EGG BOX LABEL (10-508) is to be used for all the eggs in a clutch from a single nest. Each egg, and the nest if present, is given the same catolog number.

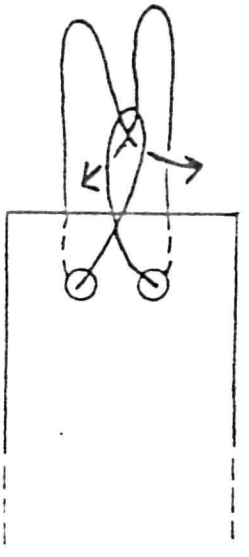
STRING: Tie the VERTEBRATE SPECIMEN LABEL (10-501) Or ANNOTATION LABEL (10-510) onto a specimen using mercurized cotton thread (number 8) or heavy linen thread. Be sure not to use thread that is too thin. Start with lengths of 14 inches and tie in the following manner :



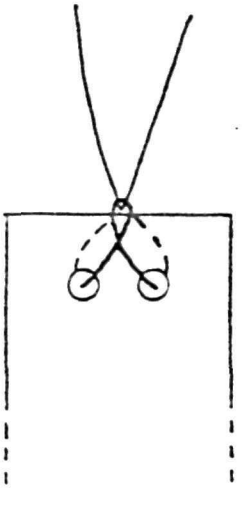
Put each end of string through holes in label



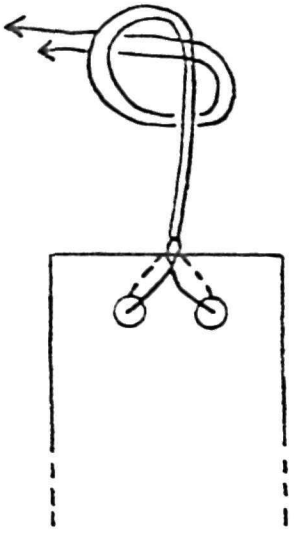
Create loop



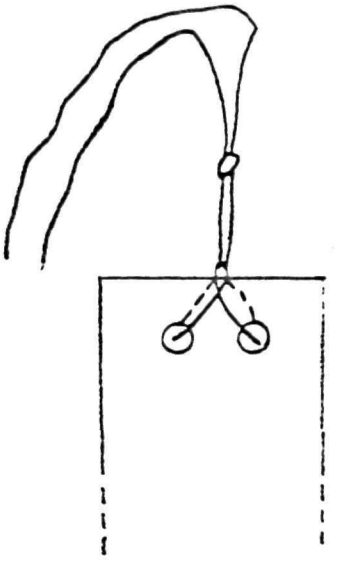
Pass ends of string through loop



Pull string tight and close loop



Tie overhand knot in string with 1 inch between knot and label



Finish label - note approx. 5 inch string after knot

Genus — The scientific name of the genus always capitalized, this and the species and subspecies can be written in pencil as these names change or the identification could have been incorrect at the time of catologing.

Group — Optional line to include appropriate taxonomic categories above the family level if known. Use pencil since classifications may change.

Habitat — The specific term(s) describing the collection habitat.

Ident. — The name of the person who identified the taxonomic name for the specimen.

Ident. by — The name of the person who identified the taxonomic name for the specimen.

Incu. — The state of Incubation in the egg when collected such as "Little, Moderate, or Heavy".

Loc. — Abbreviation for (see) Locality.

Locality — The collection locality in the order:

1) Direction from nearest town or major landmark. Always give distance North-South and East-West from point:

Example: 5.3 km. N , 19.0 km. W of Westland

NEVER: use intermediate compass points (NW,NE,SE,SW)

2) Name of County

3) State

Measurements — Any of various body dimensions measured before the animal is preserved, e.g. in mammals (1) Total Length (2) Tail L (3) Right Hind Foot L (4) Right Ear L is the standard order of measurements in millimeters written as: 201-88-34-19.

Mine — The name of the excavated mine in which a specimen was obtained.

Name — On GEOLOGY COLLECTION or MINERAL COLLECTION labels, the identification of the specimen. On INVERTEBRATE LABEL, the scientific name of the specimen composed of the generic and specific names.

No. Spec. — Abbreviation for (see) No. Specimens.

No. Specimens — The number of specimens contained in a box or jar. See Unit of Labeling under techniques section.

Notes — Any of various comments or data that the labeler may chose to include. Additional locality information, the color of a birds legs, or the disposition of records are examples.

The Scope of NPS Natural History Collections

by Tim Halverson, Jonathan Bayless and Ralph Lewis

Natural history collections in the National Park Service can serve a variety of functions. They may be used for display or interpretive purposes, as reference for study, they may serve as an inventory of a park's natural resources, they may act as a repository for specimens which vouch for results of published scientific studies, or they may be actively used in ongoing research. Each of these functions may have different requirements for development, storage, and maintenance of the collection. To the extent that requirements differ, these functions may compete with each other for space in the museum or for the curator's time. For example, a museum which develops, stores, and maintains its collection for display may not provide an adequate collection for research purposes. Similarly, a collection which contains mostly voucher specimens from scientific studies will not be appropriate for display. It is important, therefore, that each museum clearly outline the primary functions which the collection will have. This requires a concise description in the museum's scope of collections statement, of both the primary functions of the collection, and the methods of collection development and maintenance which will best serve these functions.

We believe that three distinct series of natural history collections exist within the National Park Service. Definitions of these three series are outlined below and should be followed closely by individual parks when developing their scope of collection statements for natual history collections. Natural history objects which are going to be handled by the public (eg. passed around in interpretive programs, displayed as touch and feel objects in a visitor center, or objects available for unsupervised reference by visitors in a layman's herbarium) or which are subjected to any consumptive uses, should not be cataloged as museum specimens and should not be stored with the museum collection.

Series 1. - EXHIBIT COLLECTIONS:

EXHIBIT COLLECTIONS will primarily be developed for exhibit purposes in a museum setting. Care should be taken to have full provenance or collection data for the specimens as their value as information will increase with time. These collections must not be subjected to exhibit conditions that will cause deterioration of the specimen over time. As stated in the introduction, objects subjected to consumptive use are not museum objects and this includes use in exhibits. Natural History objects not prepared exclusively for exhibit may also be used for exhibit purposes although special care and restrictions may be placed on exhibiting objects of particularly important scientific value. This includes especially those specimens from Series 3 collections that are part of a scientific research or inventory program.

Specimens in the RESEARCH STUDY COLLECTION should be fully identified and individually cataloged unless they meet the criteria for lot cataloging. In particular, individual samples from environmental sampling programs may consist of unsorted, unidentified biological specimens. These samples may be stored as a unit, identified by the sampling method and assigned a single catalog number. They should be organized and stored by locality, specific collecting site and date collected. Access to specimens in the RESEARCH STUDY COLLECTION should be limited to well trained research, resource management, and interpretive staff as with the GENERAL STUDY COLLECTION, but is also likely to include occasional visits from qualified researchers outside the National Park Service, which should be encouraged. Under limited circumstances, and only when fully protected, will it be appropriate to exhibit specimens from RESEARCH STUDY COLLECTIONS.

Any given park, if it has a natural history collection at all, will maintain either a GENERAL STUDY COLLECTION or a RESEARCH STUDY COLLECTION but not both. RESEARCH STUDY COLLECTIONS are appropriate for large parks which have a natural history theme and may be appropriate for some smaller parks which have been intensively studied or for which environmental monitoring is particularly important. All parks which are designated as Biosphere Reserves should maintain a RESEARCH STUDY COLLECTION. GENERAL STUDY COLLECTIONS will be maintained primarily by smaller parks or parks with a cultural emphasis. Such parks may decide to use their GENERAL STUDY COLLECTION as a basis from which to build a RESEARCH STUDY COLLECTION and can do so by writing a new scope of collections statement.

NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART