



Illustrations: I. Armiach

## The Collections

The National Natural History Collections at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem host 12 collections dedicated to the flora, fauna & geology of the southern Levant. The collections shed light on the evolution, taxonomy and biodiversity of the area.

## Collections Based Research

The collections serve as a safe repository and reliable baseline for scientific research in fields such as evolution, taxonomy, systematics, ecology, climate change, biodiversity, conservation genetics, agroecology and wildlife forensics.



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THE HEBREW  
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# National Natural History Collections





## Herbarium

Founded by Prof. Alexander Eig in 1920's, the Herbarium, Israel's national plant collection, houses approximately one million plant specimens from the beginning of the 19th Century. The Herbarium is one of the most comprehensive collections of Middle East flora. It includes over 3000 type specimens and innumerable unique specimens, such as first and only records of plants from the area, as well as extinct plants. This collection incorporates several sub-collections, e.g. wild vascular plants, cultivated plants, wood (xylotheque), seeds (spermatotheque), bryophytes, marine algae, phytopathogenic fungi, medicinal plants and more.



## Amphibians & Reptiles

The Amphibians and Reptiles Collection comprises over 23,000 catalogued specimens from all over the world. Most specimens are from Israel and Sinai, collected with an effort to record geographical distribution and variation. The collection is considered the most extensive regional record of Middle Eastern taxa. It is the world's only collection containing all the taxa extant in Israel.

## Wildlife Tissue & DNA

This collection consists of over 10,000 tissue samples representing the wildlife of Israel, including samples of extinct and rare species such as cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Dead Sea toothcarp (*Aphanius dispar*), Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) and the rare acacia gazelle (*Gazella arabica acaciae*). This collection supports research in molecular evolution, biodiversity, ancient DNA, conservation genetics, wildlife forensics and more.

## Mineralogy & Petrology

This collection consists of over 6500 mineral specimens from all over the world and more than 13,000 rock samples from Israel and other countries including some very rare meteorite samples and other exotic rocks such as the Mottled Zone (Hatrumim) collection.

## Terrestrial Arthropods

The Arthropod Collection includes Israel's National Arachnid Collection, with more than 300 arachnid type material, as well as the centipedes, millipedes, pollinator and inland water insects and parasitological collections. The collection was established in the 1920's by Prof. Aharon Shulov. This is the largest and most comprehensive arachnid collection in the Middle East, representing all the known arachnid species of Israel, and many species from the adjacent areas, among them the blind troglobite scorpion (*Akrav israchanani*) described by Dr. Gershon Levy, who made the collection a precious resource for arachnologists worldwide. Research in this collection includes biodiversity, faunistics, systematics and evolution of genitalia.



## Archaeozoology & Palaeontology

Hundreds of sites are represented in this collection with fauna from the Cambrian to the Holocene of Israel and adjacent areas. New sites are explored constantly. The Archaeozoological Collection includes sites representing landmarks in the early development of humankind as well as recent periods. The Palaeontology Collection hold an impressive body of information on the fossil records of the eastern Mediterranean, its biogeographic origins and the evolution of invertebrates and vertebrates. The recent vertebrate comparative collection (ca. 10,000 specimens: birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals) represents the local fauna of Israel

## Birds

The Bird Collection, founded by Prof. Israel Aharoni, contains specimens collected since 1906. The collection holds 2054 specimens of 310 species, with rare bird species of the Middle East, species that are extinct from the area and sub-species that are globally extinct.



## Fish

The Fish Collection consists of ca. 22,000 specimens of marine and freshwater fish, mainly from Israeli waters (Mediterranean, Red Sea and inland waters). In addition, the collection holds material from expeditions outside Israel. The Fish Collection holds the type specimens of 112 species and hundreds of specimens that constitute first records from our region (Mediterranean and Red Sea).

## Molluscs & Marine Invertebrates

This collection includes close to one million specimens of marine invertebrates, invertebrates from inland waters and a separate extensive malacological collection. The collection includes several thousand plankton samples, macro- and micro-benthic, serpulid tube worms, copepods, barnacles, sponges, and many other groups, mainly from the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. One of the focal study areas is Lessepsian migration, with samples from both ends of the Suez Canal and a unique sample of encrusting species from ships stranded in the Canal between 1967-1974. The inland waters collection includes unique documentation of the fauna of the drained Hula Lake. It also includes the unusual troglobite biota of the Ayyalon cave. The Mollusc Collection was established by the late Prof. Georg Haas in 1932. Together with important donations, today this collection is the most extensive in the whole Middle East, containing close to 25,000 different mollusc species with close to 3000 samples of type material and an exceptional scientific library.