Loan FAQs and Guidelines

Who is eligible to request a loan? - Loans are made to museum professionals and researchers with permanent or tenured appointments at academic or research institutions, or governmental organizations conducting mission-related biodiversity research. Students or individuals with temporary or non-tenure track appointments who need to examine our specimens should arrange for a tenured faculty member or permanent staff member to request and assume responsibility for the loan. We do not make personal loans nor do we ship loans to personal addresses.

Can borrowed specimens be sampled for DNA? - Requests to use our specimens for tissue sampling, destructive analysis, dissection, histology or other techniques that permanently alter or damage specimens are not "Loan Requests". Please refer to the section "Requesting Specimens for Sampling, Analysis or Special Preparation" for information about requesting permission to take a tissue sample from the specimen(s) for DNA or other molecular analysis. The Curator or the IZ Collection Committee will consider
  - the historical and/or scientific importance of the specimen
  - the consequences of sampling on the future use of the specimen(s)
  - the preparation history of the specimen(s) [n.b. We do not have fixation/preparation information for most of the specimens in our collection collected prior to 2000 and only limited information for specimens collected since 2000. You should assume that our specimens were first fixed in formalin before transfer to 70% ethanol for long term storage.]
  - the probability that the specimen will yield a useful molecular extract
  - evidence of the borrower's success extracting and analyzing DNA from preserved specimens [submit a list of your publications or copies of key publications that describe your techniques and discuss your results. Refer to the section on Genetic Resources for additional information about our policies, procedures and requirements related to sampling and DNA analysis.

Can borrowed specimens be stained, sectioned, dissected or altered? - Requests to use our specimens for tissue sampling, destructive analysis, dissection, histology or other techniques that permanently alter or damage specimens are not "Loan Requests". Please refer to the section "Requesting Specimens for Sampling, Analysis or Special Preparation" for information about requesting permission to stain, section, dissect or otherwise destructively analyze specimen(s). The Curator or the IZ Collection Committee will consider
  - the historical and/or scientific importance of the specimen
  - the consequences of the proposed activity on the future use of the specimen(s)
  - the preparation history of the specimen(s)

What are the borrower's responsibilities during the loan? - Our specimens are most often maintained in 70%-75% ethanol, 50% isopropyl alcohol (cephalopods only), 10% formalin (=4% formaldehyde), or are preserved dry or on slides. Maintaining our specimens in the original storage fluid at all times is an absolute requirement of any loan. Whenever possible fluid preserved specimens are shipped in 30 ml or less of fluid to meet hazardous goods "excepted quantity" shipping regulations. Larger specimens that cannot be safely shipped in 30 ml or less of fluid are packed and shipped according to appropriate DOT and IATA hazardous goods regulations. The borrower is
responsible for opening the package immediately upon its arrival and placing the specimens into appropriate storage containers with sufficient quantities of the SAME kind and concentration of preservative to prevent desiccation. We expect the borrower to monitor the condition of the specimens throughout the period of the loan and properly curate the specimens to prevent damage or loss. We also REQUIRE that the specimens be returned to us packed in the same kind and concentration of alcohol (or formalin). All labels included with the specimens must be kept with the specimens at all times and must be returned with the specimens.

**How much material can be requested?** - No more than 20 lots of specimens may be requested in a single loan request.

**How many requests can be made?** - An individual borrower is limited to two (2) OPEN loans at any time with a maximum of no more than 40 lots of specimens. If one or more of the loans are PAST DUE, no new loans will be approved until ALL specimens have been returned and all OPEN loans are satisfactorily closed. In the case of faculty advisers (primary borrower) of students, the faculty adviser may also request one (1) loan of no more than 10 lots of specimens per student. If any student loan is PAST DUE, no new loans will be approved until ALL student loans and loans to the primary borrower have been returned and are satisfactorily closed.

**How long can the specimens be kept?** - Type specimens are lent for a period not to exceed two (2) months. Other material is lent for a period not to exceed six (6) months. Specimens MUST either BE RETURNED or a LOAN EXTENSION REQUESTED on or before the due date.

**Is it possible to extend the due date for a loan?** - Loan extensions may be approved if the following conditions are met:
- a written request is submitted BEFORE the due date
- the borrower has no PAST DUE loans
- we have not received a request from another researcher to borrow the specimen(s)
- if a student loan, the student is still in residence at the university and under the daily supervision of the faculty adviser (primary borrower)

Loan extensions for types are for no more than 1 month. A second extension will not be granted. Loan extensions for other material are for up to six (6) months. A request for a second extension may be considered but the borrower will have to provide evidence of satisfactory research progress AND justify the continued need to retain the specimen(s). Student loans will not be extended if the student has graduated or is no longer working under the direction of the primary borrower.

**What are the consequences of PAST DUE loans?** - If a borrower has one or more PAST DUE loans, no new loans will be approved until ALL specimens have been returned and all OPEN loans are satisfactorily closed. In the case of faculty advisers (primary borrower) of students, the faculty adviser may also request one (1) loan per student. If any student loan is PAST DUE, no new loans will be approved until ALL student loans and loans to the primary borrower have been returned and are satisfactorily closed. If the borrower fails to return PAST DUE loans or fails to respond to correspondence recalling the PAST DUE loan, we will pursue every available means to secure the return of the material in the borrower's possession, including, but not limited to, denying all future loan requests originating from ALL individuals affiliated with the borrower's institution.
If my professional affiliation changes, can I take borrowed specimens with me? - **NO.** Our specimens may never be moved, even temporarily, from one institution to another, or from one campus or research facility of the original institution. If a borrower changes professional affiliation or professional residence, all loans must be immediately returned to the Department of Invertebrate Zoology. After the specimens have been returned and the original loans closed, the borrower may request that a new loan be made in care of the new institution or location. To clarify, if a loan is made to a borrower in summer residence at a field station, those specimens MAY NOT be taken from the field station back to the university at the end of the summer session, and vice versa.

What happens if the specimen(s) are damaged or lost during the loan? - The circumstances of the damage or loss will be evaluated by the scientist with curatorial oversight and/or the Department of Invertebrate Zoology Collection Committee. If the damage or loss is determined to be due to the actions or negligence of the borrower, the borrower will no longer be eligible to borrow specimens. Please note that any unapproved sampling, destructive analysis, dissection, histology or other technique that permanently alters or damages borrowed specimens will result in the loss of loan privileges. Please refer to the section "Requesting Specimens for Sampling, Analysis or Special Preparation" for instructions about sampling and preparation requests. Our specimens are most often maintained in 70%-75% ethanol, 50% isopropyl alcohol (cephalopods only), 10% formalin (=4% formaldehyde), or are preserved dry or on slides. Maintaining our specimens in the original storage fluid at all times is an absolute requirement of any loan. Fluid preserved specimens are shipped in 30 ml or less of fluid to meet hazardous goods shipping regulations. The borrowers is responsible for opening the package immediately upon its arrival and placing the specimens into appropriate storage containers with sufficient quantities of the SAME kind and concentration of alcohol (or formalin) to prevent drying out. We expect the borrower to monitor the condition of the specimens throughout the period of the loan and properly curate the specimens to prevent damage. We also REQUIRE that the specimens be returned to us packed in the same kind and concentration of alcohol (or formalin). All labels included with the specimens must be kept with the specimens at all times and must be returned with the specimens.

When will the loan be shipped? - Loan requests are processed in the order the completed requests and associated documentation are received from the borrower. The complete request must include:
- the formal loan request form (domestic and international loans)
- copies of all required permits and MTAs, or a signed statement that the borrower has contacted their local Customs Office and Scientific Authority and has been told that no permits are required (international loans)
- for foreign loans, a signed statement written in English and the primary language of the country of import and prepared on institution letter head that describes the contents of the shipment, the purpose of the shipment, and the name and contact information of the responsible party (see sample text)
- confirmation of availability of an acceptable return shipping method (domestic and international)
The processing time for most routine loans is 4-6 weeks from the date the request is approved by the Curator and forwarded to collection management for processing. Incomplete and/or unspecific loan requests that do not indicate the USNM number, scientific name and type status of the specimen(s) will be processed only as time permits.

**How are specimens shipped?** - Fluid preserved specimens are packed according to US Department of Transportation (DOT) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulations. Loans containing fluid preserved specimens are shipped from the Smithsonian to the borrower via FedEx, a service that accepts alcohol in small quantities for both domestic and international shipments. Loans that involve ONLY dry preserved specimens or glass slides are usually shipped from the Smithsonian to the borrower using Registered or Certified air-mail. At the conclusion of the loan period, the borrower is expected to pack and ship specimens back to the Smithsonian following all DOT, IATA and US Postal Service regulations and procedures. Given the complexity of shipping hazardous goods, US borrowers who do not have access to a shipping department within their institution should contact a commercial shipping company for guidance on packing and shipping fluid preserved specimens. International borrowers are advised to contact a Customs Broker to assist with permits, packing, shipping and customs clearance.

**Can a loan be hand-carried?** - It is currently prohibited to carry even small quantities of alcohols or formalin on passenger flights. We require that all loans involving alcohol or other liquid preservatives be shipped from the Smithsonian to the borrower and from the borrower back to the Smithsonian via a commercial shipper certified to ship hazardous goods. There are no airline restrictions on hand-carries for dry specimens or slides but many countries require special permits and/or agricultural inspections at the ports of entry or exit. All museum specimens entering or leaving the US on a commercial flight require the traveler to file a USFWS 3-177 import/export declaration at the port of entry/exit. For these reasons we discourage the international hand carry of dry specimens or slide preparations. Hand-carries involving other forms of domestic transportation (trains, buses, personal vehicles) may be acceptable. It is the responsibility of the borrower to contact the transportation provider **in advance of departure** to confirm that the material can legally be carried on the vehicle.

**Who pays the costs associated with loans?** - Subject to the availability of funds the Smithsonian currently covers all costs associated with the out-going packing and shipping of most routine loans. Some international loans cannot be shipped door-to-door. In these instances we pay shipping costs to the FedEx port-of-entry or clearance port. The borrower is expected to, and must agree to, pick up the shipment at the delivery point and pay all costs associated with inspections and customs clearances. The borrower is also responsible for paying all packing and shipping costs related to the return of the specimen(s) to the Smithsonian. The borrower MUST ship the return door-to-door to the Smithsonian even if the shipment requires the use of a commercial customs broker. Due to country-specific hazardous goods shipping restrictions, loans involving fluid preserved specimens may be extremely expensive for the borrower to return. Borrowers must provide us with documentation that they have an acceptable hazardous goods shipping method at the time they submit
their loan request. We will be unable to approve a loan request unless we are certain the borrower can return the specimens at the end of the loan period.

**Are permits needed?** - With the exception of loans involving CITES-listed species, permit requirements are usually country specific, and change frequently. At this time we have been advised that European Union countries are requiring import permits for some, perhaps all, preserved museum specimens. Borrowers from EU countries should contact their EU office regarding import and export permit requirements. Currently, Brazil and Argentina have Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs) requirements that impact our ability to lend some material originally collected from those countries.

The import and export of CITES-listed species associated with an international loan are subject to a formal permit process applicable to all countries. Information on CITES taxa, CITES import and export permits and the CITES Certificate of Scientific Exchange (COSE) can be found at the CITES website. It is the responsibility of the borrower to contact the appropriate government offices to obtain up-to-date permit information BEFORE submitting a loan request. The government offices responsible for providing permit information and issuing permits vary from country to country. Borrowers should begin their search for up-to-date permit information by contacting their country's "Scientific Authority" and "Management Authority" and their country's central Customs Authority. Contact information for most countries' Scientific and Management Authorities can be found at the CITES website.

**If a loan request is denied will a photograph of the specimen be provided?** - On a case-by-case basis we will consider requests for high resolution photographs of those specimens we are not able to lend. However, we do not have a photographer on staff so photographs are taken as time permits. We cannot guarantee that the photograph will be of sufficient resolution and appropriate orientation to provide the desired morphological data. Upon written request we may approve a one-time, non-exclusive use of the image in a scientific publication, but require that the source of the image be duly credited in the figure legend in the publication.

**If my loan request is denied can I appeal the decision?** - Borrowers will be advised of the reason(s) a loan request was denied. After reviewing the reason(s) for the denial, the borrower may either submit a modified loan request that addresses the reason(s) for the original denial, or may appeal the original decision. Appeals should be directed to the Chairman, Department of Invertebrate Zoology. The appeal should include

- a copy of the original completed loan request form,
- a copy of all correspondence related to the original request,
- a copy of the correspondence informing the borrower of the reason(s) for the loan denial, and
- a letter requesting that the loan request be reconsidered; this letter should thoroughly justify the need for the loan and must address the reason(s) the original request was denied.

In the event the Chairman upholds the original denial of the loan, subsequent appeals may be directed to the Associate Director for Research and Collections and the Director of the National Museum of Natural History.