

New Kid on the Block

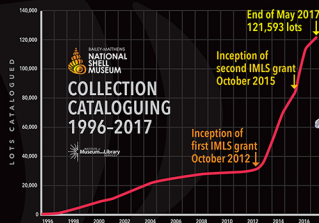
The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum Collection

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THE MUSEUM

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum (shellmuseum.org) is a specialized natural history museum located on Sanibel Island, Florida. The Museum opened to the public on November 1995 and started accruing its scientific mollusk collection from the onset. The Museum received its first accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums in March 2010, and has received steady support and commitment from its boards of trustees to maintain and refine its collection holdings.



THE COLLECTION

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum collection (acronym: BMSM) consists of circa 122,000 catalogued lots. It is an amalgamation of private donations, collections originally in other institutions, and material collected by the Museum.

The Curator is assisted in collection chores by a 15 part-time Collection Associates and about seven Curatorial Assistants (volunteers). BMSM consists mostly of Recent mollusks, with a focus on the Gulf of Mexico, Florida, and the Caribbean. There are circa 2,500 fluid-preserved lots. Fossils represent only 5.5% of the total number of lots. Digitization of the collection started in 1997, through a MS Access-based platform. By the time of the Museum's first accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) (March 2010), only 27,000 lots (out of an estimated 120,000) had been catalogued. On that occasion, one of the "Areas of Improvement by Next Review" recommended by the AAM's Accreditation Commission was that the Museum should take action to "... further improve the documentation of collections." This process started in October 2012 with the inception of the first of two "Museums for America—Collections Stewardship" grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The catalogue resides on a dedicated server, and is backed-up daily both in-house and through a commercial service (Mozy Pro).

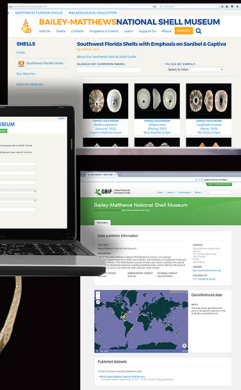


CURRENT DIGITIZATION

In 2012, to assist with data-entry efforts, BMSM applied for and received the first of two grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Only 29,000 lots had been catalogued between the time of the Museum opening and 2012; since then, an additional 83,000 lots were catalogued. In May 2016, BMSM reached the 100,000 catalogued-lots milestone. Cataloguing of the entire collection backlog was completed in early 2017, with about 122,000 catalogued lots as of mid-June 2017. The graph above shows the major breakthroughs in cataloguing rates enabled by IMLS funding. For 2016-17, resources from one IMLS grant allowed staff, using WoRMS and other standard references, to update the taxonomy and species-level nomenclature of more than 3,500 species-level taxa. We are now in the process of physical re-organization of the entire collection to accommodate the changes. These efforts ensure that BMSM is entirely documented and that the Museum has complete intellectual control over the material it holds in public trust and related metadata.

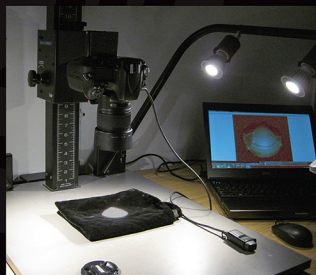
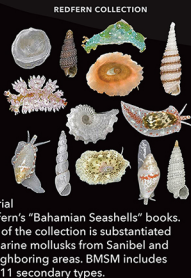
ONLINE RESOURCES

Metadata are available from the Shell Museum web site at <http://shellmuseum.emc2webs.com/collection/> (below, top) and iDigBio/Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF, bottom) at <http://ipt.iDigBio.org/resource?r=bmsm-shell>. The data in this occurrence resource has been published as a Darwin Core Archive (DwC-A). About 9,200 lots are georeferenced. The resource is registered in GBIF as a data publisher endorsed by U.S. Geological Survey. The online identification guide "SW Shells with Emphasis on Sanibel & Captiva" (inset below), currently covering 355 species, is based on the BMSM Collection. The most immediate needs of BMSM are advancing georeferencing, potential migration to standard, natural history collection-dedicated software, and improving posting images of selected/relevant holdings on the web.



COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

In 2011, BMSM incorporated about 11,000 lots from the local Florida Gulf Coast University. The decision by the FGCU administration to move the collection to the Shell Museum shows the degree of trust placed in the organization. The 10,000-lots Redfern Collection, donated in 2014, includes material illustrated in Colin Redfern's "Bahamian Seashells" books. The regional relevance of the collection is substantiated by circa 7,500 lots of marine mollusks from Sanibel and Captiva islands and neighboring areas. BMSM includes 18 primary types and 211 secondary types.



Above and left: Collection workers are assisted by a 4,000+ volume specialized library, high-resolution photographic equipment with digital stacking software, and other relevant tools and equipment.

