The Bird Collections

Eggs and Nests

Eggs

The WFVZ houses approximately 225,000 sets of eggs (equal to more than 1,000,000 individual eggs), representing at least 4,000 bird species from around the world, and collected from more than 400 individual and institutional collections. The egg collection of the WFVZ is the largest in the world.

The Western Foundation’s collections have contributed to multiple scientific fields (e.g., conservation, ecology, taxonomy, and toxicology). For example, the WFVZ provided photocopies of egg records for more than 500 species, and egg measurements for more than 400 species, covered by the Birds of North America series. This information and digital pictures of these eggs and nests are now available at www.birds.cornell.edu/birdsofna. The Foundation’s egg sets have also figured prominently in studies of eggshell thinning due to contaminants (e.g., DDT and heavy metals). Since 2000 alone, the WFVZ has contributed data to more than 200 publications. Thus, the value of the WFVZ’s collections for science, and for the conservation of bird species, continues to be evidenced.

Staff of the WFVZ provide data on eggs, including measurements and digital images, to researchers. Please contact René Corado, Collections Manager, for more information, and see our list of services available to researchers.

Nests

The Foundation has more than 18,000 specimens from around the world, representing the largest collection of nests in North America and the world.

WFVZ pictures of the nests of North American breeding bird species are available at www.birds.cornell.edu/birdsofna, or researchers can contact us for particular digital images.

Bird Study Skins

The WFVZ houses more than 55,000 study skin specimens representing over 100 countries, with the largest numbers of specimens from the United States (>12,900), Mexico (>12,600), Malaysia (>4,400), Costa Rica (>4,000), and Ecuador (>3,800). The skin collection is at least the 16th largest among North American collections.

The primary sources for specimens currently are wildlife rehabilitation organizations; wildlife research agencies; birds killed by cats, window strikes, and car impacts; and the Foundation’s own field research projects. Materials are consistently acquired by the Western Foundation and used by researchers, educators, scientific artists, and other museums. In addition, materials are used in educational tours and presentations for the general public, both at the Foundation and at outside events.

Skin loans are made to qualified researchers. Please see our Loan Policies page, and our List Of Services PDF.

Teaching Materials

The WFVZ houses more than 600 mounted bird specimens, and more than 4,500 "no-data" teaching specimens (skins, wings, egg sets, and nests) that we loan temporarily to local educators for their use in the classroom. Our live-mounts of birds are used primarily during our public tours and tours for school and civic groups. We also have available a "teaching kit" that includes background information on 5 different avian science topics (for middle and high school students), a checklist of the birds of Ventura County, and nest, egg, and study skin specimens. All teaching material loans are free. Contact us for more information.