

The Patuxent Wildlife Research Center's Washington field station has had a formal partnership with the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution since 1889. The scientists and staff of this station are responsible for systematic study of wildlife species and acquisition, curation, and permanent preservation of scientific specimens. The world is confronted with a severe environmental crisis with the rapid and uncontrolled destruction of natural habitats. Faced with this prospect, it is imperative that we gather as much information as possible about undisturbed habitats and their fauna and flora before they disappear or are severely degraded. Voucher specimens and the corresponding data assembled during field work serve as permanent documentation of the data gathered and reported as resulting from the investigations.

VOUCHER SPECIMENS

What are they?

- Permanently archived wildlife specimens and associated data
- Voucher specimens are the only reliable means of corroborating the identity of species for which data are accumulated during a study and reported in documents resulting from that study
- Voucher specimens, in addition to their use in systematic studies and as evidence for floral and faunal surveys, provide irreplaceable data regarding:
 - biochemical properties
 - demographic trends
 - geographic distribution for future investigations



- The accurate identification of organisms is essential for providing credibility to the studies and to the publications that result from those studies
- Accurate species identifications are an integral part of biology and require voucher specimens to provide a basic tool for scientific methodology, enabling subsequent workers to repeat the study

- For voucher specimens to provide permanent documentation for investigations, they must be deposited in a secure research-museum collection with a commitment to conserving specimens and making them available to researchers
- Both governmental and non-governmental agencies that require and carry out biodiversity assessments must recognize the need for voucher specimens and provide the support in the field and museum budgets for their preparation and maintenance

