

Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections
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BRTC Loan Policies and Procedures

Specimen Loan Policies

Scientific Use

1. For scientific research. The BRTC will ship specimens to researchers in the USA or Canada (other countries may be considered by the curator in charge of the division) under the following conditions:

- a. BRTC receives a formal request addressed to the Curator of the appropriate Division on letterhead stationery explaining briefly why the specimens are needed, who will be responsible for their care, how they will be cared for, and which specimens are needed. Please be as specific as possible with respect to taxa, localities, dates, ages, and sex. Our collection databases are available to search online (BRTC databases and VertNet). Requests made by e-mail (with the formal request on letterhead stationery included as an attachment) are acceptable.
- b. The request is counter-signed by the museum curator who will be responsible for the loan (unless the requester and the curator are the same).
- c. In any publications resulting from the use of BRTC specimens, we request that their voucher numbers (BRTC specimen number) be included. The requester agrees to acknowledge the appropriate BRTC Division in publications that use the specimens and to be responsible for sending the BRTC a reprint or PDF of such publications.
- d. Loans are normally for a period of 6 months. Requests for extensions of this period should be secured before the loan period is over.
- e. We do not send specimens to private individuals or institutions that lack proper facilities for housing specimens.
- f. Large requests will be broken up into several shipments, with subsequent shipments dependent on return (in good condition) of previous shipments. No more than half of a series from a locality will be loaned at a time. If possible, we highly encourage researchers with large requests to visit the BRTC to do their work.
- g. Because loans are so costly in terms of processing time, shipping expenses, and insurance, we may ask for reimbursement of these costs if the researcher is not directly associated with an active museum. Unfortunately, we are extremely reluctant to send specimens to countries other than Canada because of the difficulty in safe passage through customs.

2. For scientific illustration: policy same as above, except that we require the illustrator to sign an agreement in advance that includes a guarantee that the BRTC will receive a gratis copy of the book or article in which the illustrations appear.

3. For commercial or personal artwork: We do not loan specimens for these purposes. However, we are more than willing to let artists use certain specimens if they arrange to visit the collection and to use them on-site.

Educational Use

1. The BRTC will provide specimens for educational purposes for TAMU courses (e.g., WFSC 302, 401, 402) with the following expectations:

- a. It is the responsibility of the course professor to instill in their teaching assistants (TAs) an appreciation for the value of natural history collections and museum specimens. TAs are then responsible for instilling these values in their students prior to laboratory meetings and ultimately responsible for the proper use and care of specimens during laboratory exercises.
- b. We will loan specimens from the research collection to augment what is available in the teaching collection. At the beginning of each semester, the curator will be available for an orientation/primer to the collections designed for TAs. For our records and to avoid conflicts with other courses, we ask that requests for specimens from the research collection be submitted by the professor of the course a minimum of two weeks before the specimens are needed (email requests are sufficient). All specimens must be returned immediately when they are no longer needed or at the end of the semester.
- c. Requests for any specimen (teaching or research collection) to be taken outside of BRTC (e.g., to main campus) should be submitted by the professor a minimum of 1 week before the specimens are needed. As with in-house loans, it is the responsibility of the TA to retrieve, properly package, and return all specimens.

Information requests

The BRTC is willing to send information to researchers on label data from specimens and occasionally measurements, provided that the request is not excessive (i.e., not more than an hour or two of work). As with loans, we must receive a formal, signed request on letterhead stationery explaining briefly why the data are needed, and how they will be used. An email message is not sufficient for the formal request. Please be as specific as possible with respect to taxa, localities, dates, ages, sex, etc. Students must have this request co-signed by their advisor. Requests made by e-mail (with the formal request on letterhead stationary included as an attachment) are acceptable.

Loan Procedures

Loan guidelines

1. Specimens removed from the collection shall be replaced by a check-out slip designating their current location.
2. A loan invoice is prepared listing the total number of specimens, scientific names, TCWC catalog numbers, method of specimen preparation and condition of each specimen. One copy is packed inside the shipping container with the specimens and the other copy remains in the division's outstanding loan file. An e-mail is sent to the borrower to notify them of the incoming shipment.
3. All transport must conform to state, national, and international regulations (49 CFR Parts 100-149; IATA Regulations).
4. Upon receipt by the borrower, specimens are checked and any damage is detailed on the invoice form. This form is signed, returned to the curator, and stored in the division's outstanding loan file.
5. When a loan is returned, each specimen is checked against the invoice for possible damage resulting from transport or usage. If damages have occurred or all specimens are not returned, the curator is notified immediately.
6. Following freeze-fumigation (see the BRTC Pest Management document), the specimens are then returned to their appropriate locations in the collection and the check-out slips discarded. Slips for any specimen retained by the borrower should remain in place until they are returned.
7. Invoices for partially returned loans are kept in the outstanding loan file. Following completion of the entire transaction, the invoice can be placed in the return invoice file.
8. Notification of arrival of loan can then be sent to borrower.

Packing/unpacking loans

Care must be taken while processing specimen transactions to prevent infestation of both our and other museums' collections. Use the following procedures when dealing with loans:

- Specimens should be inspected for any sign of damage or signs of insects. Any damage should be noted on the invoice and the other museum should be alerted.
- Specimens should be freeze-fumigated prior to return to the collection (see the BRTC Pest Management document)
- Inspect packing materials for signs of insects
- Packing materials should be treated (i.e, freeze fumigation) before being reused
- Freeze or dispose of incoming packing materials
- Store packing materials in a clean and organized manner
- Packing areas should be kept tidy and free of excess debris