



Documenting mammalian megafauna from the Pleistocene beds of Siwalik Hills, India

Collections

Project Summary

This documentation project will involve cataloguing and photographing the Museum's Siwalik Hills material, which includes exciting megafauna such as ancestors of the hippo, elephant, and giraffe.

Project Detail

The Museum's Siwalik Hills material was collected from the foothills of the Himalaya in the early 1800s by British army officers Lewis Stacy and Charles Kennedy, almost certainly with the help of local people. It was sent to William Buckland, Oxford University's first professor of geology, and is believed to be the first Siwalik material to arrive in England. Alongside its scientific value, the material's connection to Buckland and to British Imperial interests gives it historical context and importance.

This project represents the exciting last push in completing the cataloguing of all fossil mammal material at the Museum, which would be a real feather in the cap of OUMNH.

Full training will be provided so that the student can:

1. Confirm the identification of the specimens where necessary
2. Take high-quality photographs of specimens
3. Enter details in the digital Collections Management System, EMu
4. Move the specimens into new storage boxes
5. Create museum labels to store with the specimens and attach numbers to the specimens
6. Check the condition of the specimens and assist with remedial conservation
7. Write a 500-word report of the project



Selection Criteria

Essential

- Interest in fossils
- Excellent attention to detail with an organised and methodical approach
- Ability to work independently without close supervision
- Good written communication

Desirable

- Interest in working in a museum setting
- Basic understanding of taxonomy and ability to distinguish between different vertebrate fossil groups
- Experience using a DSLR camera

Outcomes for the Student

This project provides particularly valuable experience for students interested in a career in zoology, palaeontology, or museum collections:

- Experience in the organisation and management of fossil specimens
- Improved knowledge of museums and collections care as well as documentation
- Increased level of comparative anatomy skills
- Experience in collections database work
- Good organisational, documentation, and IT skills
- The opportunity to network with members of MNH staff, including researchers and members of the public engagement team

Reasonable Adjustments

The museum is committed to making reasonable adjustments to its summer placements to make sure that students with disabilities or health conditions are not substantially disadvantaged. If you are concerned about meeting the selection criteria for a project of interest, or completing relevant tasks, please get in touch with ella.mckelvey@oum.ox.ac.uk before submitting your application to discuss possible adjustments to the project.

General Enquiries

To find out more about this project, please email ella.mckelvey@oum.ox.ac.uk