

NEWSLETTER

CURATOR'S NOTES

MAY 2019



**INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS
COMMUNITIES** IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE
MUSÉE DE LA NATURE
ET DES SCIENCES **COLLECTIONS**

Part 3: Zoology collections

Religious communities have collaborated in the development of all collections in the Museum, but especially the botany collection, which was covered in Part 2 of this newsletter. The entomology, ornithology, ichthyology and mammalogy collections are covered in the following paragraphs. Here again, the information drawn from the collections bear witness to those who have had a major impact on the history of natural sciences in Quebec.

The entomology collection

The entomology collection is the biggest in the Museum in terms of the number of specimens. It was in large part set up by the religious communities. The impressive number of collectors and the diversity of places where specimens were collected are a testament to the exchanges among institutions and the importance of entomology in the teaching of the sciences. The register of the natural history society, the Société d'histoire naturelle du Séminaire Saint-Charles-Borromée, the former name of the Séminaire de Sherbrooke, and the yearbooks of the seminary from 1893 list many donations of insects to the Museum and mark the beginning of a collection that today is estimated to contain more than 30,000 specimens. In 2009, a more exhaustive inventory of the collection was begun. More than 10,000 specimens were registered in the database that allowed us to locate seven dragonflies given in 1894-1895 by Father Pierre-Achille Bégin and a butterfly

from his student, Rodolphe Archambault. The name of Father Jos B. Mignault appeared on the data entries of 110 insects collected between 1905 and 1937, specifically in the regions of Sainte-Thérèse and Saint-Lambert in Quebec, places where he spent several years of his life. He was a teacher of sciences at the Séminaire de Sainte-Thérèse for 14 years, then he became the parish priest in Saint-Lambert. He exchanged specimens with other entomologists, as we see from several insects that came from Manitoba, Rome and Algeria, among other locations.

The present inventory includes a number of insects collected by noted entomologists, including 68 between 1932 and 1945 by Brother Adrien Robert, and 1,279 between 1900 and 1948 by Brother Joseph Ouellet, both Clerics of Saint-Viateur. Joseph Ouellet devoted himself to teaching at the Institut des Sourds-Muets. His free time was directed to the natural sciences, and his great passion was entomology. Adrien Robert also taught at the Institut des Sourds-Muets. There he met Brother Joseph Ouellet who introduced him to the study of insects. He is recognized as a specialist in the study of odonates and the coleoptera staphylin, the rove beetle. The Ouellet-Robert entomological collection of the Université de Montréal was thus named in their honour.



Acronicta noctivaga (2009.X.590) collected in 1910 in Manitoba by Norman Criddle, a well known entomologist in the agricultural field. - Collection of Jos B. Mignault.



Gomphus spicatus, from Adrien Robert

To date, the most significant addition, 2803 insects, came from a less known cleric, Brother Jules, born in 1898 under the name Joseph Lapointe; he died in 1976. A member of Frère des Écoles chrétiennes, he taught in Longueuil from 1929 to 1938 and was a great friend of Brother Marie-Victorin. He received a certificate in entomology from the Université de Montréal. A well-known authority in his field, he was consulted by many learned colleagues. On March 6, 1939, he founded the Cercle André-Michaux, a group of young naturalists in Longueuil.



Insects from Brother Jules

The ornithology collection

In 2017, according to computerized data, the ornithology collection included 2018 mounted specimens, 38 avian skins, 3826 eggs, 318 nests and some thirty anatomical parts, thanks in large measure to the research and teaching vocation of the religious communities.

Under the direction of Canon Léon Marcotte, as is shown in the acquisitions register, the ornithology collection grew. According to an article that appeared in *La Tribune*, April 22, 1954, the Museum had some fifty mounted bird specimens before 1900. In 1964, there were 520.

In 1981, the collection grew in both size and diversity. The collections of the Institut des Sourds-Muets, acquired through the efforts of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, was further diversified through the travels of religious figures and exchanges among institutions. As an example, this Australian Magpie, kept in captivity by the Botanical Garden of Sydney, Australia, was registered, then mounted after its death at the Museum of Sydney, on September 4, 1926. Before arriving at our door, it took a long and winding road.

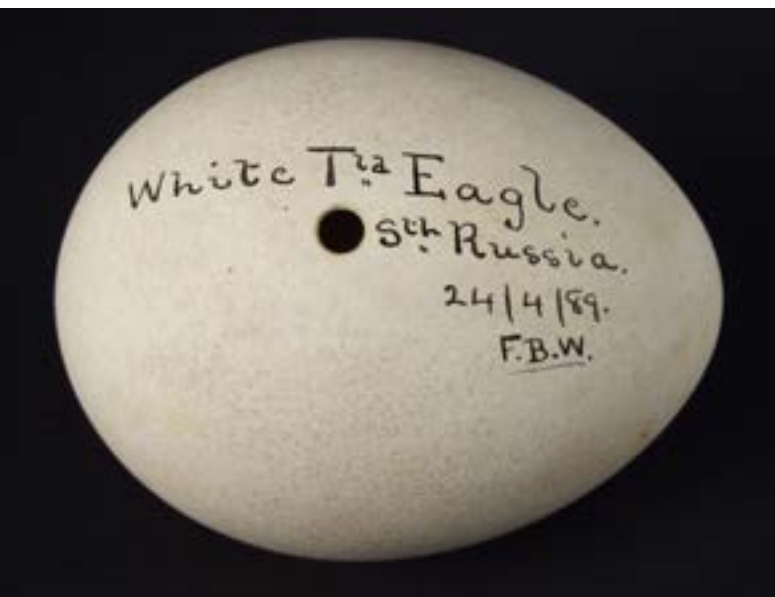


Australian Magpie (L-92-1156).

In examining the specimens from the collection of the Institution des Sourds-Muets, the name of Father Charles Arnault catches our attention. Oblate of Marie-Immaculée, he built an important natural sciences museum on the Côte-Nord in the late 19th C. Six specimens from his original collection, collected between 1869 and 1914 in Labrador and at Pessamit¹, are preserved in our collection.

Aside from the specimens themselves, anecdotes provide more information about the history of collecting. Quite dramatic circumstances allowed Brother Crête, curator of the Musée de l'Institut des Sourds-Muets, to acquire a Tundra Swan on March 21, 1929. That year, several swans leapt into Niagara Falls and met a tragic end. Brother Crête obtained one of the birds through the efforts of M. J. H. Jackson, manager of the "Niagara Falls Commission". Astonishingly, Léon Marcotte, at the Séminaire de Sherbrooke, also obtained a swan in the same circumstances through the efforts of Mr. Hoyes Lloyd of the Federal Museum.

An impressive collection of eggs and nests also arrived with the collections from the Institut des Sourds-Muets and Mont Saint-Louis. Among them, a nest of an American Crow with six eggs collected on May 15, 1927 from Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu by Brother Armand Caron, c.s.v. He was known as a natural sciences and entomology specialist. His collection of insects was added to the Ouellet-Robert collection from the Université de Montréal.



Egg of a White-tailed Eagle (1994.X.4570) - Crevier Collection (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1981)

Some pieces are priceless, because today their collection would not be considered acceptable. This is the case, for example, of this egg of a White-tailed Eagle from the Crevier collection.

In 1995 and 2015, the collections acquired from the Musée d'histoire naturelle Georges-Préfontaine² and the Centre historique des sœurs de Sainte-Anne in Lachine respectively enlarged the collection with 184 mounted bird specimens, several of which were part of the beginnings of the collection built between 1931 and 1945 by Sister Marie-Jean-Eudes at the museum of the convent of the Sœurs de Sainte-Anne. These specimens represent a period which has ended, where the animals were presented in themes within the appropriate settings designed to make them appear alive. This is an extract of a talk by Sister Marie-Jean-Eudes given around 1950 to promote the Musée Sainte-Anne:

Here, the Red Fox has captured a bird in the forest edge where his den is probably located, and he is taking it back to the cubs. That is as much as I will say to my young listeners. One of them came back one day to see if the fox had finished eating the bird. Oh, the lovely innocence of children!

¹ Pessamit is the new name of Betsiamites, the name on the data entry.

² We should recall that the Musée d'histoire naturelle Georges-Préfontaine was set up by the Université de Montréal in 1982 and is based on the collection built at the museum of the convent of Sainte-Anne, Lachine by Sister Marie-Jean-Eudes.



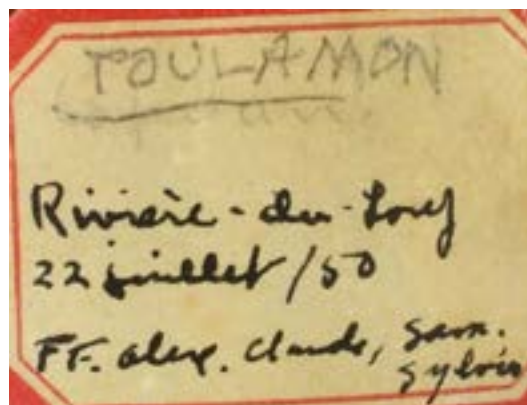
Born in 1897 and named Eugénie Tellier, Sister Marie-Jean-Eudes was the student of Brother Marie-Victorin and Brother Adrien from 1925 to 1931, during which time she continued her studies in botany. She earned a Master's degree in this field in 1943. She was one of the most important figures in the Cercles des jeunes naturalistes.

Sister Marie Jean-Eudes with visitors. - The Black-billed Magpie (1995.1718.61) in its original showcase.

The ichthyology and marine science collection

The computerized ichthyology collection today has 194 fish and anatomical specimens. Thirteen of them came from the Institut des Sourds-Muets, fourteen from Mont Saint-Louis, six from the Musée du Séminaire de Nicolet and twenty from the Université de Montréal (Collection Préfontaine-Musée Sainte-Anne).

Among the museum's collections, those of fish and marine invertebrates evoke among other things the teaching of marine biology at Grande-Rivière in 1950 by the Société canadienne d'histoire naturelle. The names of the Brothers Claude (Marcel Côté), Alexandre (Alexandre Blouin), Sylvio (Albert Legault) and Samuel (Samuel Brisson), all members of the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, were registered on the labels of the specimens today preserved in ethanol. Brother Claude taught sciences at the Collège du Mont Saint-Louis and Brother Alexandre illustrated the Flore laurentienne of Marie-Victorin. We should note as well that Albert Legault and Sam Brisson, who left the priesthood in the 1960s, pursued their respective careers as professor of botany and person in charge of the herbarium at the Université de Sherbrooke.



Microgadus tomcod (2003.X.67) collected in 1950 at Rivière-du-Loup by Brothers Alexandre, Claude, Samuel and Sylvio.

The mammalogy collection



*Société d'histoire naturelle du Séminaire Saint-Charles-Borromée. - Léon Marcotte in the centre of the photo and the fox (G-77-565)
© Regroupement des archives du Séminaire de Sherbrooke et de l'Archidiocèse de Sherbrooke; SPA 2743.001*



According to an article in *La Tribune*, May 22, 1975, the collection numbered 232 mammals. Today, it comprises 564 mounted specimens and anatomical parts. Twenty-three were acquired in 1981 from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 54 from the Séminaire de Nicolet in 1987 and 33 in 1995 from the collections of the Musée d'histoire naturelle Georges-Préfontaine and the Musée de Sainte-Anne. The collection today has several older specimens like this Red Fox, for which Father J. E. Lachance paid \$5.00 in 1912-1913 to have it mounted.

Some specimens seized the imagination of visitors to the Musée du Séminaire de Sherbrooke. This is the case of the Moose that has held pride of place at the Museum since 1925. Since that time, generations have profited from the donation by the rhetoricians of 1897-98, among whom was Léon Marcotte. While attending a reunion in 1925, they gave the amount of \$100.00 for the mounting of this moose.



At the Musée du Séminaire de Sherbrooke until 2002



The permanent exhibit « Alteranima », Musée de la nature et des sciences, since 2013 - photo: Jocelyn Riendeau



The permanent exhibit « Au fil des saisons », Musée de la nature et des sciences, 2002 to 2013 - photo: Jocelyn Riendeau.

This is also the case of the whale jawbone discovered in the Eaton River at Cookshire and acquired at the time of Léon Marcotte in 1951. Carbon 14 analyses showed that it dated from 370 ± 50 BP³. It must have been transported to this place by human hands.

³ BP : Before Present



La Tribune, 19 April 1951: whale bone



*storage facilities Allyre Couture - Musée de la nature et des sciences
© Karine Couillard*

This newsletter is a tribute to the members of the clergy who helped the Museum become what it is today and is a retrospective look at the most significant moments in the contributions of the religious communities to the development of these collections. While the majority of them are dead, their work continues to benefit younger generations. In 2019, the Museum's collections comprise some 65,000 objects of which 29,300 have been registered. A gigantic amount of work to inventory and document the collection remains to be done to bring other actors out of the shadows. It is always an important moment for the employees in the conservation sector when they are able to reveal new stories and thereby ensure the transmission of this knowledge.

We thank the archival service of the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, the Clerics of Saint-Viateur, the Regroupement des archives du Séminaire de Sherbrooke and the Archdiocese of Sherbrooke as well as the archival service of the Congrégation des Sœurs de Sainte-Anne for their valued collaboration. We also thank the Government of Quebec for the financial assistance under the Plan culturel numérique du Québec, which allowed us to digitize more than 950 photographs of the collections, including many which are presented in this newsletter.

Québec 

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NOTRE CULTURE, CHEZ NOUS, PARTOUT

HOW TO CITE OUR NEWSLETTER

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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