

## THE FOSSIL COLLECTION

Publications about the fossil primates we hold focus on three or four principal areas. The foremost of these are inquiries into anthropoid origins in Africa and specifically relating to the archaic anthropoids and their contemporaries among prosimians that we recovered from a wide variety of sites in the Eocene, Oligocene, and Miocene deposits of Egypt.

A second most significant series of collections, yielding research publications, are those we have made in subfossil deposits of Madagascar. These collections are most important for understanding of the extinct giant fossil lemurs of Madagascar and for interpretation of paleoenvironmental changes during the past few thousand years of the “great red island.” Curiously, the bones of giant lemurs from Madagascar’s cave and swamp deposits are much more common than are remains of extant lemurs and associated fauna. Because of this our many Madagascar expeditions have yielded a rich harvest of giant lemur remains. These constitute the best reference library outside Madagascar for the study of skulls, dentitions, and postcranial skeletons of giant extinct lemurs. In some cases, such as *Archaeolemur*, the representation of a broad range of successive ages at death is unequalled.

Altogether our fossil primate collection is in excess of 3,600 specimens. The search for fossil primates necessarily yields numerous examples of associated vertebrates of all

sorts: fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and non-primate mammals, which also serve as the background for research on the past of the regions - including the Wyoming Eocene - from which our collections come. An active publication program on these non-primates has long continued. Our field programs include an international team of scientists who work with Dr. Simons. Our research programs involve not only those skilled in collecting and publishing on fossil primates but also experts in a wide variety of related disciplines including paleoecology, stratigraphy, paleomagnetism, radiometric dating, paleobotany, and vertebrate paleontology.



The fossil collection can be studied in conjunction with extensive comparative collections housed at the new facility. Above a giant lemur skull is shown to be larger than that of a female gorilla.

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FOSSIL PRIMATES



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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRIMATE CENTER

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Top: Egyptian field camp  
Middle: Oligocene primate skull  
Bottom: Front of new facility - 1013 Broad Street

## THE BUILDING

The paleoanthropological collections at Duke have recently found a new home at 1013 Broad Street in Durham in a building with 3,100 square feet of space giving room for growth and storage of the fossils found during the foreseeable future. These collections of original fossils are unique in America because for decades overseas expeditions have been permanently given approximately half of each year's discoveries. Our unequaled primate series forms an important part of the research program of the Duke University Primate Center. At present this unusual resource is housed in approximately 70 cabinets holding over 700 drawers of materials. Individually-catalogued specimens number over 23,000. For easy access the collections are arranged systematically. A grant for their computerization and digitization of outstanding finds is pending.

## Field and Laboratory Training

Each year large numbers of American professional researchers and graduate students accompany us to our field sites where a variety of techniques of fossil recovery are employed. In the laboratory, training in fossil preparation and replication of fossils is provided by our Curator Prithijit Chatrath.



The international field crew in the Fayum, Egypt in 2001.

## TEACHING AND OTHER RESOURCES

In addition to a well-stocked preparation room, 1013 Broad Street houses a small casting laboratory and a large workroom where the principal part of the collection is housed. This room has desks for several volunteers and researchers and other offices are available for graduate students and visiting scholars. Three rooms house Dr. Simons' large collection of reprints and library books and there are also staff offices, a kitchenette, and other facilities. The building is wired for telephone and high-speed internet access to all of the offices and lab spaces.



The large workroom housing most of the fossil specimens includes space for research and cataloguing.

A multimedia teaching area provides a projection screen, blackboards, and large classroom table and chairs with seating for up to 15 students. For the first time ever, our large comparative collection of primate casts, color slides, as well as the original fossil series are all housed together in easy reach of the classroom, a situation that optimizes teaching effectiveness.



The classroom area provides space for courses and seminars as well as easy access to the fossil casts and specimens.

## LONG-TERM PLANS

Currently we are well along into a campaign of raising funds to secure Duke ownership of 1013 Broad Street (at present under an extended rental agreement) and we look forward during the next decade to the acquisition and expansion of endowments which will give security to the facility as well as provide for staff salaries.



There are preparation and casting labs where the fossils are prepared and duplicated for study or cast exchange.

*Photograph credits: Jim Wallace, Elwyn Simons, Patrick Lewis, and Ronald Usery.*