

# AMERICAN MUSEUM NATURAL HISTORY

**Media Inquiries:** Michael Walker, Department of Communications  
212-769-5766; walker@amnh.org  
www.amnh.org

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## **RARE NATURAL HISTORY VOLUMES FROM RONALD S. WILKINSON COLLECTION NOW AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY LIBRARY**

### **PUBLIC DISPLAY SHOWCASES AN INTRICATELY ILLUSTRATED ENTOMOLOGICAL VOLUME, INSECT SPECIMENS, AND ANTIQUE MICROSCOPE FROM THE NOTED LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BIBLIOGRAPHER**

A lavishly illustrated volume of insects published in London in 1837 titled *Illustrations of Exotic Entomology...* by Dru Drury is just one of the **rare books from the recently bequeathed Ronald S. Wilkinson collection and now on display in the Research Library of the American Museum of Natural History**. This exhibit, sampling items from the Wilkinson collection, also includes an 18th century brass microscope, a drawer of insect specimens, and a glass-fronted study case where insects could be kept alive while they were studied. The exhibit will remain on display to the public through September. The Museum's Research Library is open to the public Tuesday through Thursday from 2:00 until 5:30 pm.

Ronald Wilkinson, Ph.D., was an environmentalist, author, bibliographer at the Library of Congress in Washington DC for 38 years, and an avid collector of books on natural history, some of which he donated to the Museum's Library over previous decades. One of his books, a bound herbarium (a collection of plant specimens) from 1672, is believed to be the oldest such collection held in the United States. When he died on February 22, 2009, Wilkinson left a substantial gift to the Museum's Library and Department of Invertebrate Zoology—a treasure trove of 2,462 volumes of natural history books, 3,676 insect specimens, 16 historic microscopes, antique cabinets made to house insect collections in glass-topped drawers, and his personal papers. The Library staff is now working to catalog each book and create a condition survey of every item for future conservation work. Some of the volumes are extremely rare, such as *The new book of knowledge. : Shewing the effects of the planets ...*” printed in Boston by Zechariah Fowle in 1767 (only three copies of this colonial imprint are known to exist), and *The historie of the world : commonly called the natural historie of C. Plinius Secundus*, printed by Adam Islip in London, 1601, in its original leather binding.

Chartered as a library by the State of New York in 1869, the Department of Library Services at the American Museum of Natural History has grown into **one of the world's finest collections of natural history research materials**, as well as one of the largest, with more than 500,000 volumes. The extensive

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photographic collection consists of over a million black-and-white prints and negatives, color transparencies, slides, and lantern slides of specimens, exhibitions, permanent halls, rare-book illustrations, architecture, and expeditions. The primary mission of the American Museum of Natural History Research Library is to support the scientific work of the Museum. The Library is also available to the international scientific and scholarly community, including students and interested members of the public, for research purposes by appointment. The Reading Room, which is located on the fourth floor, is open to walk-in public visitors from Tuesday to Thursday, 2:00 - 5:30 pm. For more information, click on <http://library.amnh.org/policies/index.html>.

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