

## Why So Many Specimens?

Now, I said that there were about 25,000 species of fish alive today. Why, then, do we have two million specimens? That's a question that a lot of people ask, because obviously, in an institution like this where we're concerned about conservation and we're concerned about losing species, we don't want to be responsible for the diminishment of any species. So the collections we have have to have a scientific justification and rationale. And what's the rationale for having large numbers of individuals of a particular species? For example, here, this species, *Rhomboplites aurorubrens*. This is quite a widespread species in the Atlantic Ocean. We have probably 200 plus specimens of this particular species. Why would we do that? Well, quite honestly, the reason is because of variation. The whole rationale for studying evolution, or the whole driving force of evolution, is really variation between individuals, because that's what natural selection operates upon.