



*Museum's cast of characters marches on*

**third dimension | university museum**

**By Theresa Forsman**

One of the University of Nebraska's most interesting cast of characters is on display in Morrill Hall on the UNL campus.

For over one hundred years the University of Nebraska State Museum has provided research tools, education and bigger-than-life exhibits for Nebraskans and for visitors from across the nation.

The museum was established in June, 1871. In 1927 the University of Nebraska Board of Regents approved the construction of Morrill Hall to house the museum. The museum was named for Charles Morrill, president of the board from 1892 to 1899. But the museum collections have grown, and in 1970 the Research and Systematic Collections division of the museum was moved to the fourth and fifth floors of Nebraska Hall, said Harvey Gunderson, associate director of the museum.

Less than one percent of the museum's collections are on exhibit at any one time in Morrill Hall, he said, adding there are nearly three million specimens in the biological and anthropological collections in addition to the rocks, minerals, crystals and meteorites.

The museum's collections are a result of teamwork, Gunderson said.

He said the museum has received specimens as gifts and has help from many persons in the collection of specimens.

The museum has an elephant fossil which was collected from 84 of Nebraska's 93 counties, he said.

The museum's strongest collection is the vertebrate life collection, Gunderson said, and the museum's elephant fossil collection is so popular the museum has been dubbed elephant hall.

Less well-known but just as valuable as the exhibits is the research collections. These collections are an intricate part of any museum program, said Lloyd Tanner, coordinator of the systematic collections.

"You must have long hours of proper research before you can make any display," he explained.

Collections for the museum were started in 1871, Tanner said, but in the past 20 years, the researchers have been trying to fill the gaps of nearly completed specimens.

*Photos by Ted Kirk*

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