



Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum & Aquarium

Position Description

Science Director and Curator

Summary of Opportunity

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum & Aquarium (BMNSM&A) seeks qualified applicants for the position of Science Director and Curator to oversee the care and management of the Museum's scientific collection of shells and other specimens, lead the institution's work in research and publication, and help shape the Museum's public engagement and impact through exhibits and educational programs.

This is a uniquely exciting moment for the Museum and opportunity for the next Science Director and Curator to influence the fields of natural history and malacology, and how they are communicated to the public. BMNSM&A has just completed a multi-year redesign and reinstallation of its permanent exhibits, and the retiring Science Director and Curator is completing a 30-year tenure at the Museum that includes, among many important accomplishments, full cataloguing of the scientific collection.

The ideal candidate will have skill and enthusiasm for communicating science and natural history to the public, a strong knowledge and passion for mollusks (with a preference for expertise in shelled mollusks such as gastropods or bivalves), commitment to guiding the future of the institution's science and research priorities, a record of publication and grant writing, and a collaborative and collegial working style.

This is a full-time position with benefits and reports to the Executive Director.

About the Museum

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum & Aquarium is a natural history museum and aquarium in Sanibel, Florida, with a primary focus on shells, mollusks, marine life, and conservation education. It is a non-profit, educational organization that is accredited by both the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Museum's permanent exhibits include the Great Hall of Shells, which displays thousands of shells from around the world; and the Living Gallery of Aquariums which exhibits about 60 species of mollusks and other marine life. Temporary exhibitions, publications, and educational offerings for all ages provide a dynamic year-round program.

The Museum's collections include approximately 600,000 shells and other specimens in over 135,000 lots, a wet collection of about 4,000 lots, the collection of living marine life (which is primarily managed by the Museum's aquarists), and a malacological library.

The Museum welcomes between 60,000 and 70,000 visitors annually with tens of thousands more served by offsite and outreach programs. The Museum's home of Sanibel Island and the surrounding Southwest Florida region are renowned as among the best beach and shelling destinations in the United States.

The Museum has a staff of 20, a Board of Trustees of 16, and an active and dedicated corps of volunteers.

Primary Responsibility Areas

Collections:

- Oversee the care, management, and growth of the scientific collection and maintain best-practice museum standards.
- Oversee management of the collection's cloud-based software (Specify).
- Collaborate with aquarium staff on the selection, care, and interpretation of the living collection.
- Build and maintain relationships with collectors and institutions to create new opportunities for collections-based projects and growth of the Museum's collection.
- Engage in fundraising for the collection including grant writing and dialogue with donors.
- Oversee management of the malacological library.
- Manage collections support staff and volunteers.

Science:

- Establish a vision for a research program that expands upon a foundation of local mollusks, their evolutionary relationships, and conservation.
- Play an active role in professional networks and associations to help advance the study and appreciation of mollusks, create opportunities for partnerships, and maintain the Museum as a key presence and contributor to the field.
- Collaborate with Museum staff and regional partners to identify and pursue research priorities.
- Seek grant funding in support of science and research projects.
- Publish in peer-reviewed journals.

Exhibits, Education, and Engagement:

- Working with the Executive Director and other staff, help develop ideas for new permanent and temporary exhibitions and ensure their scientific accuracy and content.
- Be a public advocate for mollusks, their conservation, the Museum, and the field through presentations, in-person interaction with the public, press appearances, and digital media.
- Working with the Education Department, help identify topics for programs (such as lectures, classes, and community science) and in select cases deliver them.
- Be available to participate in events and meetings with Museum constituents including the Board of Trustees, donors, Museum Members, institutional partners, shell clubs and enthusiasts, and others.

Qualifications and Requirements

- Ph.D. in Zoology, Marine Biology, Geology, Paleontology, Conservation Ecology, or a related field. Postdoctoral experience preferred.
- Specialization and expertise in the study of mollusks, with a preference for strength in knowledge mollusks of the western Atlantic.
- Experience in best-practice stewardship, cataloguing, and imaging of a natural history collection, preferably a mollusk collection.
- Experience operating collection management software and databases.
- A record of publication in peer-reviewed journals.
- Experience in writing research grants.
- Experience supervising staff and/or volunteers.
- An enthusiasm and aptitude for working with living animals and the aquarists on research and interpretation of the living collection, with a preference for some experience working with living mollusks.
- Familiarity with accreditation standards and processes for the American Alliance of Museums and/or the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is preferred but not required.
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate well and work positively with a broad diversity of individuals including Museum staff, science professionals, mollusk enthusiasts, Museum constituents, and the public.
- A sense of humor is a plus.

To Apply

Please submit a letter of interest and resume/CV by email to Executive Director Sam Ankerson: sankerson@shellmuseum.org.