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VMNH Now Home to the Largest Collection of Virginia Mammal Specimens

Specimens from the Virginia Commonwealth University transferred to Virginia Museum of Natural History

MARTINSVILLE, Va. (September 25, 2007) – The Virginia Museum of Natural History now holds the largest collection of Virginia mammal specimens thanks to the transfer of over 16,000 specimens from the Virginia Commonwealth University's Mammal Collection. The collection was officially transferred from VCU to VMNH in June and was transported to the Museum on Tuesday, September 25.

Of the more than 16,000 specimens, 95 percent of them are native to Virginia. Nearly 70 percent of the collection is of rodents, and roughly 25 percent are shrews and moles. The collection also includes 50 of the 73 species of land mammals native to Virginia. State-listed species in this collection include the first Virginia records of a water shrew and rock vole.

"The collection serves as physical evidence of Virginia's natural heritage," said Dr. Nancy Moncrief, curator of mammalogy at VMNH. "These specimens are a tremendous asset for my work, as well as researchers from around the Commonwealth and the United States."

The mammal collection was established in 1969 by VCU professor of biology, Dr. John F. Pagels. The collection includes voucher specimens for 16 Master theses

awarded by VCU from 1973 to 2005. Two books, "Mammals of Virginia" and "Mammals of the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland," relied heavily on data associated with this collection. Pagels also serves as a VMNH Research Associate, and he served on the Museum's Scientific Advisory Board in the late 1980s.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville seeks to increase understanding of and appreciation for the natural history of the Commonwealth through education, research, collections, publications and exhibits. The Museum – an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution – is accredited by the American Association of Museums, a distinction earned by fewer than 10 percent of museums in the United States. The Museum is a member of the Association of Science-Technology Centers, Virginia Association of Museums, Heritage Preservation, and is an agency of the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia. With over 22 million objects in its collections, the Museum reaches nearly 1 million people annually through on-site and traveling exhibitions, classroom outreach programs, the Museum's Web site, public events and publications.

The Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sundays from Noon to 5:30 p.m. Members are always admitted free. Admission is \$7 for adults; \$6 for senior citizens and college students; \$5 for children and youth 3-18; members and children under 3 free. For more information about membership or volunteer opportunities, please call 276-634-4141 or visit www.vmnh.net.

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