

In 1903, then Lt. Governor of Bengal initiated the idea of starting a small museum at Darjeeling in order that visitors to this hill station might have an opportunity to obtain information about birds and butterflies of the district. A suitable site was chosen in the Lloyd's Botanical Garden and a building was constructed at a cost of INR 14,000.00.

It was then, not the intention that the collection should be such as to enable a student to study the fauna of the hills. This arrangement proved unsatisfactory and the present building was completed in 1915 at a cost of INR 50,000.00

The Bengal Natural History Society under the name 'Darjeeling Natural History Society' was formed in 1923 for management of the museum.

Charles M. Inglis, an amateur ornithologist held the post of curator for twenty-six years from 1923 to 1948 and built up the museum with enthusiastic co-operation of E.O Shebbeare, Conservator of Forests, West Bengal. **G.E Shaw**, Superintendent of Cinchona plantation and a host of officials and tea planters.

A journal of the Society first appeared as a quarterly in June, 1926, the above mentioned arrangement continued up to 1976. But the funds available were not enough and were finally taken over by the forest department, Government of West Bengal in 1976. The publication fund support was granted from the Hill Department Branch Secretariat from 1982 to 1991. After this the responsibility was laid to the Education Department, Government of West Bengal from where this publication continued release until 2001.

His Excellence **Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi** the then Governor of West Bengal visited the old building of Bengal Natural History Museum on 07.06.2007. He suggested regarding improvement in display and shifting of the museum. He also suggested and approved a site for the purpose. In this proposed site the construction of the building started in 2010 and was completed in 2013. Finally in 2015 the museum was shifted to this new building.

BIRDS

The collection of birds now numbers around 697 out of a listed 713 for the area; those not represented are exceedingly rare or local. For desire of space it is possible to display only a few species in the cabinets. The collection of bird's eggs (110 species) is also large and suffers the same handicap. The collection of bird's nests is small but very attractive one.

MAMMALS

Out of 80-90 species found in the area 67 are displayed and are well represented, including many from other parts of India. Prized collection is the rare cats. The Red Panda, The Himalayan Flying Squirrel, Clouded Leopard etc.

REPTILES AND FISHES

35 different snakes out of 76 of the area are displayed in the museum. Other reptiles and amphibians are well represented. Of over 100 species of fishes 57 can be seen in the museum.

INSECTS

Butterflies, moths, dragonflies and beetles are well represented. Those displayed (moths and butterflies-608, beetles, dragonflies and other insects-1104) form only a fraction of the collection.

RESERVED COLLECTION

The museum is also maintaining 2922 rolled birds and 47 rolled mammal skin for study purpose. Apart from that there are also 52 well maintained flat mammalian skins.

TAXIDERMY

From the very date of its inception, this museum has maintained a small taxidermy unit manned by a trained taxidermist. Most of the small birds and mammals displayed here are cured, stuffed and rendered ready for display.