

Report William H. Mason III Preparators' Grant 2022

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Maximizing storage efficiency and use of the Alabama Museum of Natural History paleontology collection

Adiel Klompmaker requested and received funds to purchase a rock saw and blades to remove excess matrix from fossils to open up much needed collection storage space and to ensure that some fossils more easily fit in future exhibits. This enhanced efficiency would benefit students, researchers, and the general public as more specimens can be stored in the collection and more specimens can be displayed. Benefits would be both immediate and long-term. Fossils in the [paleontology collection of the Alabama Museum of Natural History](#) (ALMNH) are permanently stored on the 3rd floor of Mary Harmon Bryant Hall at the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, whereas specimens on display are in the ALMNH exhibits in Smith Hall, diagonally across from Mary Harmon Bryant Hall.



The grant was approved, and the check was received in February 2022. Due to significant supply chain delays, I had to switch vendors. A rock saw and blades finally arrived late November 2022. In the Spring 2023 semester, I worked extensively with a student intern on several of curation projects. One main project was to trim the excess rock of more than 100 hundred Pennsylvanian-aged slabs from Alabama with reptilian/amphibian trackways and plants; she also removed rock around some Mississippian-aged shark teeth under study. This intern got a summer internship at Yale University with the help of this internship. This semester, I am working with a new student intern to remove excess rocks from Mississippian-aged crinoids from Alabama. Both students now have experience with effectively and safely operating this saw, which is an important skill to have for curating of a collection. Thus far, the collection saved up to 8 trays/shelves of space in the collection, which is nearly equivalent to the costs of the saw! One trimmed specimen with a trackway is now on display at the ALMNH (see image). Trimming work is not done yet and the saw will be used for more Pennsylvanian-aged slabs we have in the collection and Paleocene limestones.



Prior to this saw, we did not have a single saw in the paleontology lab. I am very grateful to the Association of Applied Paleontological Sciences and the grant committee of William H. Mason III Preparators' Grant for providing this grant for our underfunded program. This directly benefitted the training of students and has opened up substantial space in the ALMNH collection.