

# The Use of Research, Teaching, or Personal Collections to Teach an Inquiry Based Introductory Biology Lab

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University, or personal, specimen collections provide an often under-utilized teaching opportunity for introductory biology instructors. However, there are several advantages to using such collections: students can develop observational and inferential skills by studying morphological adaptation to habitat and niche specialization within a habitat; they can be exposed to extinct or endangered species and to the importance of preserving these species; students can learn to appreciate the role of a Museum as a teaching institution, and a place of active research.

In addition to the educational merits of using such materials, student interest is piqued by the “field trip” aspect of such a lab when going to a Museum, and by the chance to appreciate biological material in a “real world setting”. Finally, such a lab is a low cost endeavor; specimens can usually be easily obtained and protected from handling at very little cost to limited lab supply budgets.