

The Crustacean Collection of the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, Austria

Peter C. Dworschak & Verena Stagl, Dritte Zoologische Abteilung, Naturhistorisches Museum, Burgring 7, A-1014 Wien, Austria

Abstract

The collection of Crustacea of the Natural History Museum in Vienna (NHMW) dates back to the middle of the 18th century. The oldest specimens documented were acquired in 1806. In the 19th century, the collection increased rapidly with material obtained from collectors - e.g., J. Natterer, Brazil; G. Frauenfeld, Red Sea; T. Kotschy, Gulf of Persia; I. Pfeiffer, Indonesia - , during various expeditions - e.g. the circumnavigation of the 'Novara' 1857-1859, the Austrian-Hungarian Northpole-Expedition (1872-1874), the deep-sea expeditions of the 'Pola' to the Eastern Mediterranean (1890-1893) and the Red Sea (1895-1898) - in exchange with other museums, institutes or scientists - e.g. the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris; the British Museum, London; P. Roux, Marseille, E. Ehlers, Göttingen; H.N. Kroyer, Copenhagen; J.G. de Man, Ierseke - or purchased - e.g. Museum Godeffroy, Hamburg. Most important among the types are the species described by C. Heller, H. Balss, and O. Pesta. In addition, the collection houses the extensive material of Adriatic decapods on which O. Pesta based his classical monograph "Die Decapodenfauna der Adria".



Curators of the Crustacean collection

Johann Gottfried Bremser	1806 - 1826
Vincenz Kollar	1826 - 1860
Ludwig Redtenbacher	1861 - 1865
Alois Rogenhofer	1865 - 1877
Karl Koelbel	1878 - 1896
Theodor Adensamer	1896 - 1900
Arnold Penther	1900 - 1910
Otto Pesta	1910 - 1945
Hans Strouhal	1946 - 1962
Gerhard Pretzmann	1963 - 1994
Peter C. Dworschak	1995 -

The history of the invertebrate collection is much older than that of the Naturhistorische Museum. The first natural history collection was founded by Emperor Francis I (Franz Stephan von Lothringen), who reigned from 1745 to 1765. In 1748 he purchased the collection of the famous scientist Jean de Baillou in Florence. The collection contained more than 30.000 objects like minerals and fossils, snail shells, mussels, corals and also crustaceans. The collections grew rapidly especially in the 19th century through purchases, exchanges, collection activity of the staff members and gifts from scientifically inclined travellers and from persons on duty in foreign countries. Expeditions were organised, ordered by the Emperor as well as by private research organisations and scientific institutions to obtain plants and animals from all over the world. The old Viennese natural collection (k.k. Naturaliencabinet) was situated in a part of the old Viennese castle, so-called 'Hofburg'. The government decided to establish a new museum to stop the crippling restriction of space at the museum in the Hofburg. The new 'k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum', one of the most representative buildings of historicism in Austria, was inaugurated in August 1889 by Emperor Franz Josef.

Important Expeditions

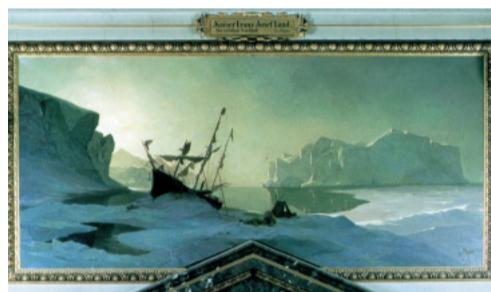
One of the most important journeys for our museum was the circumnavigation of the earth by the frigate 'Novara', 1857-1859. A number of eminent natural scientists took part, one of them Georg Ritter von Frauenfeld, curator in the invertebrate department. The material he collected was voluminous and continues to be examined and published by prominent scientist up until the present time.

The Austrian-Hungarian Northpole-Expedition was under the command of Carl Weyprecht and Julius von Payer. The ship 'Tegetthoff' was trapped in the ice in August 1872 and drifted with it for almost two years. After the discovery of Franz Josef Land the crew finally abandoned the ship. Besides valuable notes, diaries and drawings they saved several samples of animals. It took them 94 days pulling the boats over the ice to reach the open ocean.

The Austrian-Hungarian Deep-Sea Expeditions with the vessel 'Pola' to the Eastern Mediterranean (1890 - 1893), to the Adriatic (1894), and to the Red Sea (1895 - 1898) belonged to the highlights of that time. Franz Steindachner, curator in the fish collection and leader of the zoological department, participated. The qualitative and quantitative results were enormous, several Austrian and foreign specialists examined the material and published it in 14 series of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.



Frigate 'Novara', surrounded by the names of sampling locations. From frontispiece of Scherzer (1861)

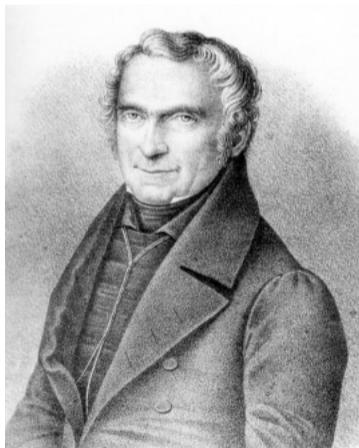


Franz Josef Land with abandoned 'Tegetthoff'.



S.M.S. 'Pola' in Pula, 1895

Collectors and scientists



Johann Natterer (1787 - 1843) was an assistant at the 'k.k. Naturaliencabinet' in Vienna. Emperor Franz II sent a scientific mission to South America in 1817. The occasion was the marriage of his daughter Leopoldina to the Portuguese crown prince Dom Pedro. Johann Natterer, a member of this team, remained on the continent for 18 years and compiled a superbly documented collection.



Georg von Frauenfeld (1807 - 1873) was curator of the molluscan collection and participated in the circumnavigation of the earth by the frigate 'Novara'. He collected a large number of decapods during the journey.



Camil Heller (1823 - 1917) studied medicine and zoology in Vienna. Since 1863 professor for zoology in Innsbruck. He examined the crustacean collection in the Viennese museum as well as the crustaceans collected during the circumnavigation of the earth by the frigate 'Novara' and during the k.k. Northpole Expedition. He described many new species; the type specimens are deposited in the NHMW.



Otto Pesta (1885 - 1974) studied zoology in Innsbruck. Since 1910 curator of the crustacean collection at the NHMW. He examined lakes in the Austrian high mountains and was a specialist for copepod systematics. In addition, he studied the decapod fauna of the Adriatic Sea; the results were published in the 1818 monograph 'Die Decapodenfauna der Adria'. The photo shows O. Pesta (right) together with Rupert Riedl.

Specimens



Atergatis frauenfeldi HELLER, 1861 [currently *Atergatis signatus* (ADAMS & WHITE, 1848)], Red Sea, G. v. Frauenfeld coll. 1855, holotype, NHMW 12084 (Photo: A. Schumacher)



Oedipus nudirostris HELLER, 1861 [currently *Coralliocaris nudirostris* (HELLER, 1861)], Red Sea, G. v. Frauenfeld coll., syntype, NHMW 7790



Pilodius spinipes HELLER, 1861, Red Sea, G. v. Frauenfeld coll. 1855, syntype, NHMW 10818 (Photo: A. Schumacher)