



Cornell **CAU**  
**Education Vacations**

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Dear Participants,

I couldn't be more excited to share my interest and life-long passion of natural history collections with you. My curiosity for collections work began as a child when I accompanied my father, now an emeritus curator of birds, on museum expeditions. I was too young to be helpful collecting or meticulously preparing birds on those early trips, so I passed the days catching insects, butterflies, and fish in places like the Russian far east, the Solomon Islands, and the American west. These trips fueled my imagination and soulful curiosity in the natural world. My appreciation for collections deepened later in life when I relied on specimens to answer research questions of my own. After nearly 30 years of developing and using collections, I adore them even more. Collections inspire new ways of thinking about the natural world, provide insight into population and ecosystem change over time, and feed creative minds. I look forward to sharing my admiration and reverence of natural history with you. We are going to learn a lot from one another, including how collections can reach broader audiences in impactful ways.

The course should be exciting. We'll spend a good chunk of time in the collections learning about how specimens are used for scientific discovery, discuss current debates surrounding the controversies and ethics of scientific collecting, and spend a morning in the field mist-netting birds. With luck, we'll have visits from Emeritus Professor of Biology and Curator of Birds, Sievert Rohwer (my father and mentor), and a visit to Cornell's Fashion and Textile Collection with Curator Denise Greene, as part of an exploration of the creative uses of collections.

I'm excited about the course and very much looking forward to meeting you and sharing insightful and engaging discussions with you! Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions.

All the best,

Vanya Rohwer, PhD  
Cornell University Curator of Birds and Mammals