Chapter 49
ST. GALLEN: Naturmuseum St. Gallen

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The St. Gallen museum of Nature, Switzerland, was founded in 1846. Its oldest specimen is a stuffed Nile crocodile, donated to the city of St. Gallen in 1623 and exhibited in the former boys monastery Saint Kathrin. The main part of the actual collection was assembled in the nineteenth century by members of the St. Gallen society of natural sciences, founded in 1819. The entire collection consists of about 300,000 specimens, one third of them being pressed and mounted plants in the herbarium. The paleontological collection holds about 25,000 specimens. The main focus here is on the fossils of cantons St. Gallen, Appenzell Innerrhoden and Appenzell Ausserrhoden.

The paleontological collection is stored in the new building that opened its doors in November 2016. The most important objects are on display in the permanent exhibition. These include an almost complete skeleton of an *Edmontosaurus regalis* from the late Cretaceous of Wyoming, USA, as well as some large ammonites from the Cretaceous of the Alpstein. Further important specimens are shark vertebrae from the Late Cretaceous of the Churfirsten und the skulls of two rhinoceroses from the local Aquitanian.

The paleontological collection is housed in a section of the earth history collection room. The specimens are stored in metal drawers. Their data are stored in a self-configured File Maker data base. There is neither a special laboratory nor a paleontological preparation room in the museum. The financial support is provided almost completely by the city of St. Gallen.

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49.1 Research

Actual research is focused on regional fossils from the Cretaceous, Paleogene and Neogene. Examples are shark vertebrae and ammonites from the cretaceous, as well as rhino skulls from the Aquitanien. Since most of the specimens are from old collections, there is a problem with the correct scientific names and their synonyms. Presently there is an project to publish a book and to show an exhibition on the local fossils, which will clarify many of these problems.

There are scientific cooperations with the universities of Zürich (Dr. Christian Klug) and Neuchâtel (Dr. Damian Becker), as well as with the private collectors Dr. Peter Kürsteiner (www.geo-alpstein.ch) and Urs Oberli, St. Gallen. Results of these cooperations are several publications in scientific journals and local news papers (Figs. 49.1, 49.2, 49.3 and 49.4).

49.2 Educational Work

The permanent exhibition showing fossils is entitled "Leben im Wandel" (changes in the history of life) and arranged as a kind of a tripartite cat walk. The first part is devoted to the beginning of the universe, the earth and the moon. It shows with a

Fig. 49.1 Permanent exhibition, "changes in the history of life", in the new St.Gallen museum of nature

Fig. 49.2 Large ammonite, *Ermericiceras* sp., fossil and life-size reconstruction by Beat Scheffold

Fig. 49.3 Shark vertebrae, *Cretoxyrhina* sp., from the Late Cretaceous of the Churfirsten mountains

few, well chosen objects, some of the main stations of life in the Paleozoic. The second part exhibits the reign of the dinosaurs, ichthyosaurs and pterosaurs. The third part shows fossils from the Paleogene and Neogene, as well as a sample of recent vertebrates.

Fig. 49.4 Rhinoceros skull, *Diaceraterium* sp., from the Aquitanian of Bühler AR

Schools are one of the primary targets in visitor policies. They build up about one third of the approximate 40,000 annual visitors. The visits of school classes are supported by the museums educational staff as well as special handouts on various topics.

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