

NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA PROPOSED INSECT IDENTIFICATION CENTRE FOR AFRICA

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HISTORY

THE IDEA of a museum in Kenya came about on 25 March 1909 through the efforts of people who were interested in natural history. As their collections increased in size they kept on moving them from one storage to a bigger one until finally a museum was built to house the collection in 1929.

The museum has an extensive collection of insects (over 1,000,000 specimens). Most of the orders and families are adequately represented, especially insects of economic and biological importance.

The collection is composed of insects from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zaire, Zambia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Camerouns, Liberia, and small numbers from various parts of Africa and the world.

The specimens were acquired over a period of 70 years and the collection was made by keen scientists, research institutions, private collectors and amateurs.

Nairobi has the following points which should be taken into consideration when the meeting is considering a centre for identification.

(1) There are adequate laboratory facilities at present, and a new building to house the entire Division of Natural Sciences has been erected and specimens were moved in during the months of June 1981.

(2) Nairobi's climate is excellent for specimen storage. It is fairly cool and dry compared with other hot humid tropical towns. We have had no problems with moulds or too much humidity or a very dry atmosphere, all of which cause deterioration of specimens. And there is no need for air-conditioning. The average temperature is about 24°C.

(3) Communications between Nairobi and other parts of the world are easy both by phone and air.

(4) Accommodation—there are several reasonable hotels within walking distance from the museum.

(5) Other important research institutions are also within close proximity of the museum, e.g. the ICIPE, ILRAD, the Medical Research Laboratories, the Welcome Research Laboratories, the Herbarium, the University of Nairobi, and UNEP.

(6) The museum also has access to most of the international scientific journals and other publications through its own library, the University of Nairobi Library, and the Kenya Forestry, Veterinary and Agriculture Library.

(7) The museum also caters for other disciplines such as ornithology, herpetology, ethnography, ichthyology, palaeontology, and archaeology.