

CURB THE URGE TO COLLECT

Have you ever thought of building up your own private collection of fossils or stone tools? Here is a word of good advice: Don't do it!

The National Monuments Act of 1969 established a National Monuments Council which preserves all items of historical, archaeological and palaeontological interest. In a recent circular this Council stated that "the excavation and removal of archaeological and palaeontological objects by unauthorised persons results in the destruction of valuable scientific and cultural-historical material. The offenders are usually people who are merely trying to satisfy an urge to collect. In many cases, however, they are people with a genuine interest in the early history of the country who in their ignorance do untold harm because they do not collect or excavate relics according to scientific principles, cannot interpret their discoveries or publish their results, and store their finds in private collections where they lie, useless and neglected. It should always be remembered that a fossil or archaeological specimen, without scientific observation of its real meaning, is worse than useless since it represents the destruction of scientific evidence."

According to the Act "no person may destroy, damage, excavate, alter, remove or export the anthropological or archaeological contents of graves, caves, rock shelters, middens or other places used by the prehistoric or protohistoric occupants of South Africa, or any other archaeological or palaeontological object, unless he is in possession of a permit issued by the National Monuments Council."



Sonder 'n amptelike permit uitgereik deur die Raad vir Nasionale Gedenkwaardighede, mag niemand enige fossiele, klipwerktuie of die inhoud van grafte of grotte wat deur die prehistoriese bewoners van ons land gebruik was, versamel of opgrawe nie. Voorwerpe van onskathare wetenskaplike waarde is reeds deur onkundige versamelaars vernietig.

Die meegaande foto toon 'n besonder waardevolle skedel van 'n uitgestorwe seekoei-soort wat duisende jare gelede langs die Vaalrivier gelewe het. Hierdie skedel is etlike jare gelede deur personeellede van die Museum met die vriendelike medewerking van mnr. I. M. Hipkin op die plaas Uitzoek, in die omgewing van Cornelia, uitgehaal.

These provisions also apply to rock paintings, rock engravings, stone age implements and fossils occurring on the surface or open sites. However, certain exceptions apply to mining, engineering and agricultural activities.

No doubt permits will only be granted to properly trained and experienced scientific investigators. The object of this legislation is to prevent the destruction of valuable archaeological and palaeontological sites and objects.

In the past, certain private individuals such as dr S. H. Rubidge of Graaff-Reinet have collected many valuable fossils. Such collections, if built up scientifically, i.e.

with every fossil and its locality clearly described, can contribute greatly to our knowledge of early life in South Africa. However, such private collectors, who for instance keep proper scientific records, are very seldom found.

The law on the protection of archaeological and palaeontological objects cannot be enforced without the help of the public. Notify the Police if you find vandals at work on such sites and contact your nearest museum when the fossilized remains of humans, animals and plants or stone tools are found.



Drie panele met opvoedkundige inligting oor sommige aspekte van die werksaamhede van die Nasionale Museum, word in medewerking met die Direkoraat van Kultuursake (O.V.S.-streek), tydens kultuurweke op die platteland ten toon gestel. Die meegaande foto is op 'n kultuurweek te Kroonstad geneem en toon mnr. B. C. Stevens. Opvoedkundige Beampte van die Museum, besig om die vorming van fossiele aan leerlinge van die Kroonstadse Hoërskool te verduidelik. Die panele is reeds te Bultfontein en Valjoenskroon vertoon en sal met verloop van tyd ook in ander sentra besigtig kan word.

(Foto: Die Noordelike Stem)

HET U GEWEET?

- Die Nasionale Museum is op 20 Julie 1877 gestig en op 20 Mei 1878 die eerste maal vir besigtiging deur die publiek oopgestel.
- Die eerste voorsitter van die Raad van Kuratore was hoofregter (later President) F. W. Reitz.
- 'n Mediese dokter, dr. H. Exton, was die eerste onbetaalde kurator.
- Die Museum was gehuisves in die historiese Raadsaaltjie in St. Georgesstraat en is in 1915 na Wardenplein, in Aliwalstraat (waar dit vandag nog geleë is) verskuif.
- Die Nasionale Museum is die vierde oudste museum in die land. Die drie ouer museums is die Suid-Afrikaanse Museum, Kaapstad (1825), Albanie-museum, Grahamstad (1825) en die Port Elizabeth-museum (1857).
- Hoewel die Nasionale Museum die eerste museum in die Vrystaat was, het die Vrymesselaarslosie van Smithfield vanaf 1869 'n versameling opgebou wat moontlik as 'n museum in die klein beskou kon word. Hierdie versameling is later aan die Nasionale Museum geskenk.