

CONNECTICUT STATE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



Exhibit | *Birds Up Close*: Featuring Collections from the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History

May 26, 2026 – August 2, 2026

William Benton Museum of Art, UConn Storrs

Birds Up Close is an exhibition highlighting the avian collections of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History (CSMNH), in collaboration with the William Benton Museum of Art at UConn Storrs. Alongside this summer exhibit, the CSMNH will be holding other opportunities for the community to look closer at birds during a scientific illustration workshop and their annual Museum Day.

See Birds From Around the World Up Close at New Museum Exhibit



Specimens of the Short-eared owl being prepared for the upcoming exhibition Birds Up Close by the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History at the Benton Museum of Art in Storrs. © CSMNH 2026

Storrs, CT — The Connecticut Museum of Natural History (CSMNH) has partnered with the [William Benton Museum of Art](#) to bring visitors face-to-face with a remarkable avian collection at UConn. Featuring more than 30 preserved specimens, the *Birds Up Close* exhibition offers an intimate look at bird diversity, showcasing examples of birds of prey, perching birds, ducks and other waterfowl, a striking emu specimen, and an example of the Museum's trademark owl.

Birds Up Close explores the history of early collecting practices, and the role natural history collections have played in shaping scientific knowledge. Visitors are invited to consider how these specimens were gathered, studied, and preserved, and how museum practices have evolved over time. Contemplating

natural history specimens as works of art, the exhibition highlights the enduring value of avian collections to research, education, and public understanding today.

In this exhibit, you will get a rare, up-close view of birds from around the world, held by the CSMNH as part of the F. Eugene Allen collection. Most of the animals were carefully preserved by taxidermists over 100 years ago! These stunning natural history specimens have been prepared in a way that allows you to see details in bird form and function, which can be overlooked unless you can see birds up close.

Bird species outnumber all other groups of vertebrates, or animals with back bones. There are around 11,000 species of birds alive today and new species are being discovered by scientists all the time. Birds are both the most diverse group of land animals and the only animals alive today that have feathers. Feathers help birds fly, swim, stay warm and dry, camouflage themselves to avoid predators, and even attract mates with bright, stunning colors!



Eggs in an old cigar box with historic labels, from the collection of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History. © CSMNH 2026

Along with possessing different types of feathers, birds have body sizes and shapes that reflect their behaviors and the habitats in which they live. Adaptations, which arise from evolution by natural selection, help animals survive and reproduce in their environments. Over time, distinct types of birds have developed adaptations such as different ways of feeding, flying, swimming, making nests, singing, and finding mates. Imagine the long, slender beak of a hummingbird that drinks nectar from tube-shaped flowers. Now think of the stubby, sharp beak of an owl that eats small mammals. These dissimilar beak shapes allow birds to specialize and eat the different types of food found in different habitats.

Birds Up Close will be on exhibit at the William Benton Museum of Art from May 26 through August 2, 2026. The Benton is located at the University of Connecticut, 245 Glenbrook Road, Storrs, CT. Galleries & Museum Shop are open Tuesday through Friday 10am–4pm and Saturday & Sunday 1–4pm. Admission to the Benton is always FREE. Donations are gratefully accepted. Contact the Benton at 860-486-4520 or visit benton.uconn.edu with questions. Alongside this summer exhibit,

the CSMNH will be holding other opportunities for the community to look closer at birds during a scientific illustration workshop and their annual Museum Day.

This exhibition is supported in part by Liberty Mutual Insurance.

"LiMu Emu is proud to support their high-flying friends!"



Exhibit programming:



Scientific Illustration of Birds with Virge Kask at the Benton

Saturday June 27, 2026 from 2-4pm

\$20 per person (\$15 for CSMNH or Benton Members)

Join this hands-on, beginner friendly session where you will learn to observe bird anatomy, capture gesture and posture, and render feathers and beaks using pencil and tracing paper. Ms. Kask will teach the best techniques for conveying the essence of these captivating creatures and provide tips for drawing from mounts and live subjects. You will receive a folder with information about scientific illustration and supplies for making your illustrations in the classroom.

Registration is required and includes all supplies.

Visit <https://csmnh.uconn.edu/programs> for more information and to register.

Big Bird Day!

Saturday July 18, 2026 from 1-5pm

Gant Science Complex Light Court at
UConn Storrs

The annual Museum Day of the CSMNH this year is all about birds! View even more specimens from the collections and enjoy avian-inspired learning and crafting activities. Free and open to the public!

Visit <https://csmnh.uconn.edu/programs> for more details.



If you have questions or require any accommodations to participate in these events, please contact the Museum at 860-486-4460 or CSMNHinfo@uconn.edu.

Programs are sponsored by the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History at the University of Connecticut.

For more information contact: **Elizabeth Barbeau**

860-486-4460 | Web: csmnh.uconn.edu | Facebook: [@CSMNH](https://www.facebook.com/CSMNH) | Instagram: [@ctnaturalhistory](https://www.instagram.com/ctnaturalhistory)