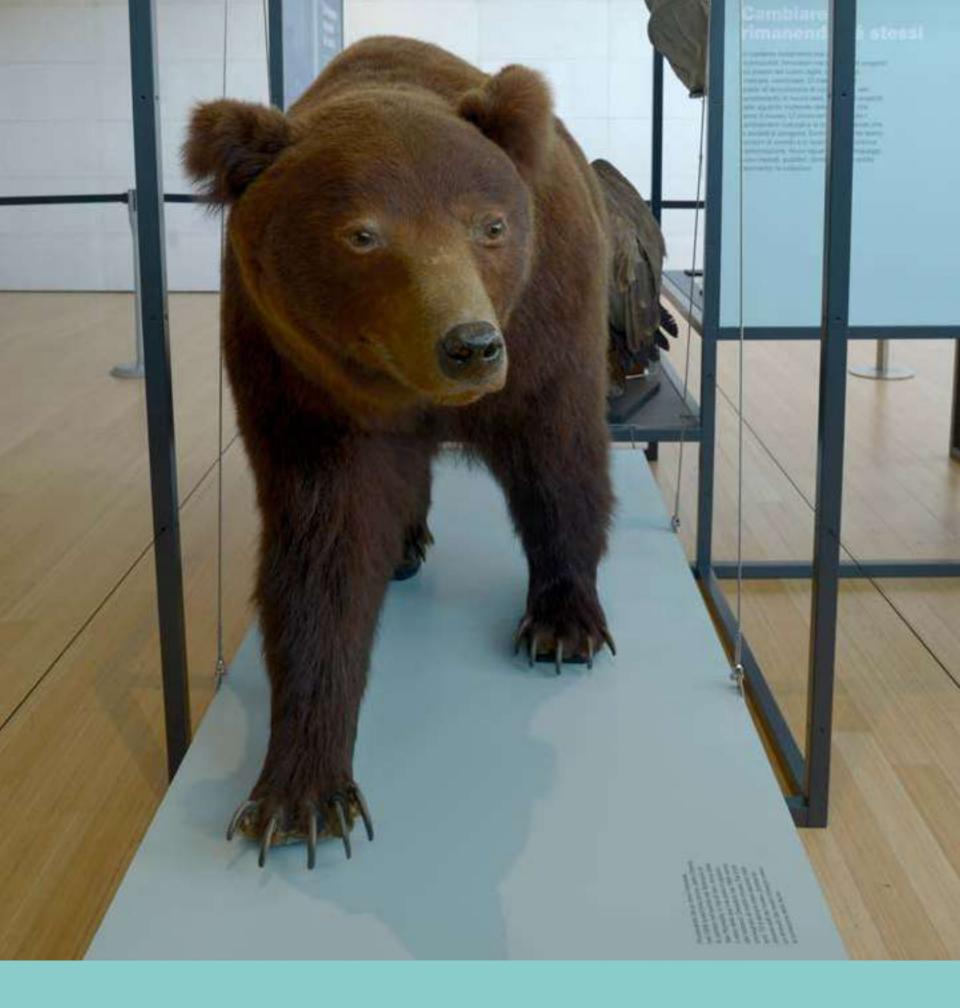


A century of museum

MUSE is part of a centuries-long history marked by the foundation in 1922 of the Trento Natural History Museum. In this exhibition we have put together fragments of a long evolutionary path to explain the deep-rooted reasons behind what we do. An opportunity to get to know the protagonists, human and non, ideas, practices, and events that have made MUSE a symbolic place of encounter for scientific knowledge and the public. A story of rigour and passion, science and politics, memory and visions of the future.

Transfer
from Palazzo
Scolastico in via
Verdi to Palazzo
Sardagna
in via Calepina,
Trento 1975
(MUSE Archive)





This brown bear, called Charlie, was brought from a Milanese circus in 1958 to the enclosure of the Sanctuary of San Romedio in Val di Non, where he lived out the rest of his life observed by visitors. He died in 1966 and was handed over to our museum. Since the early seventies he has always been on display in the museum's various locations, becoming a symbol of our commitment to the protection of fauna.



Changing yet staying true to ourselves

Constantly changing but always recognisable, innovative but firmly rooted in the pillars of our work: conservation, research, and enhancement. We transform by acquiring new exhibits, moving to new locations, but also driven by the changing gaze of the people who make the museum. We innovate by following cultural changes and the new questions posed by societies. We evolve because we are portions of the world and as such in constant transformation. New looks, new languages, new methods, audiences, questions and a solid benchmark: our collections.

Transfer from Palazzo Scolastico in via Verdi to Palazzo Sardagna in via Calepina, 1975 (MUSE Archive)



Transfer from Palazzo Scolastico in via Verdi to Palazzo Sardagna in via Calepina, 1975 (MUSE Archive)



Transfer from via Calepina, 2013 (Archive MUSE)



Arrival at MUSE, 2013 (MUSE Archive)



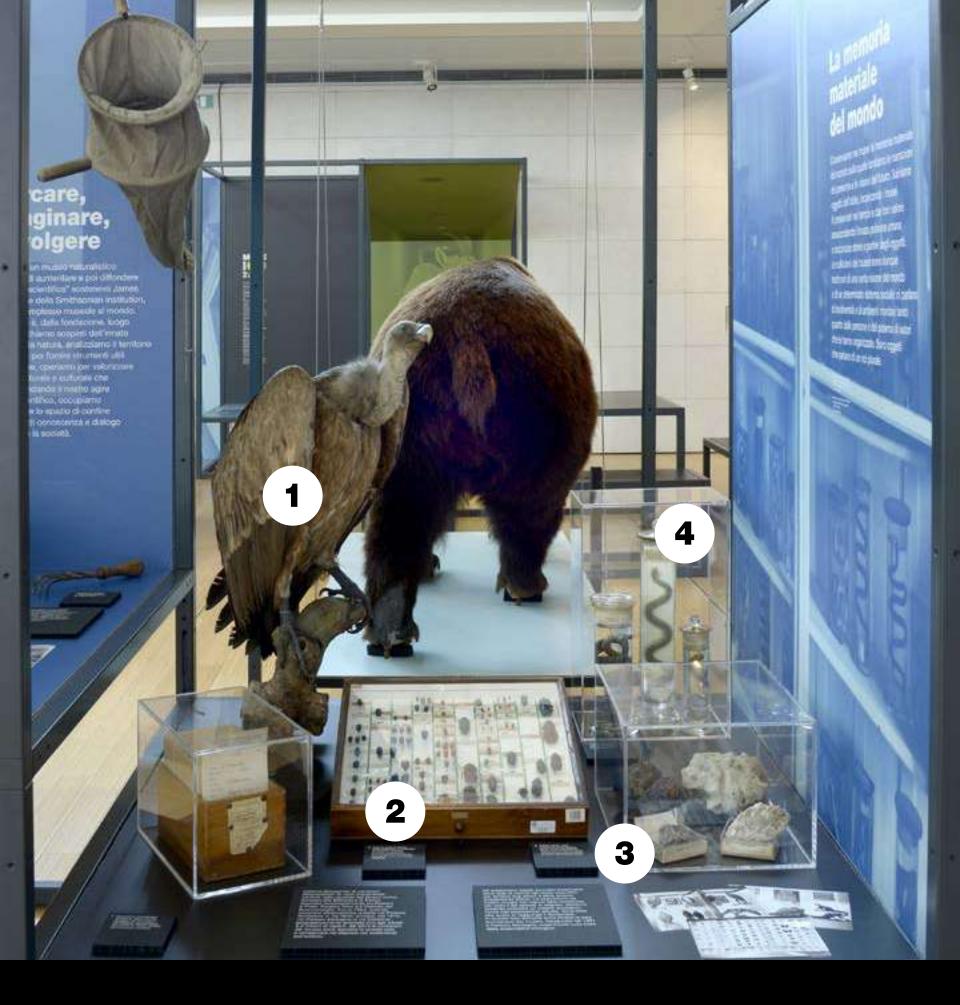
The history of our institution is marked, as Gino Tomasi, museum director from 1965 to 1992, emphasised, by "splendours and removals". This postcard, published in 1930, highlights the growth of the museum's activities since its foundation in 1922. At the bottom it shows the names it had been given up to that point in time. These were followed by Tridentino Natural Science Museum from 1964 and finally MUSE – Science Museum since 2013.



The material memory of the world

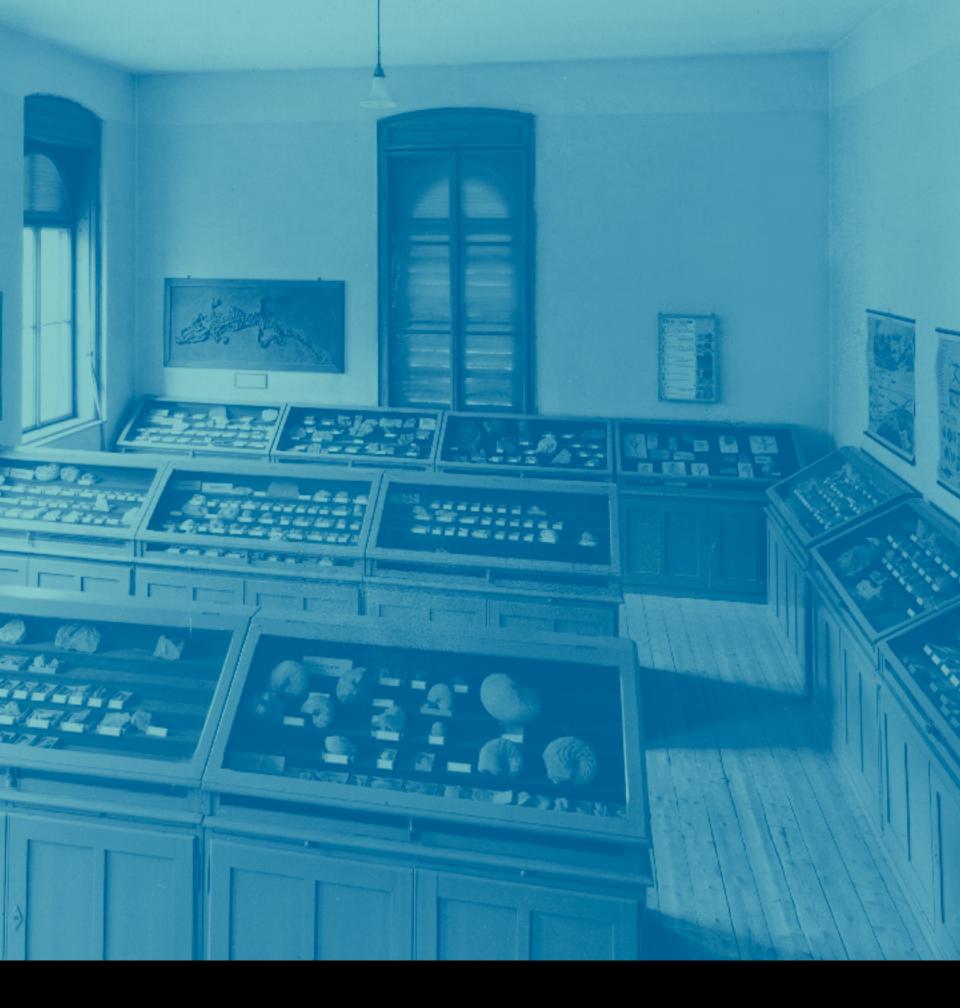
In museums we preserve the material memory of the world on which we base narratives of the present and visions of the future. We save objects from oblivion, entrusting museums with the task of preserving them in time and giving them value by indulging the innate human urge to tell stories from objects. Museum collections are therefore witnesses to a certain worldview and social system: they tell us as much about biodiversity and mountain environments as they do about people and the value system that organised them. They are objects that speak of a plural us.

Display case with systematic museum layout in the via Verdi building, circa 1960 - 1970 (MUSE Archive)



A heterogeneous collection of nineteenth-century specimens of various origins were brought together in the collections of the Civic Museum annexed to the Trento Library; they were then moved incessantly between Palazzo a Prato, Palazzo Thun and Buonconsiglio Castle until 1924, when they found a home together in Palazzo Scolastico in via Verdi and, since 1975, in Palazzo Sardagna in via Calepina. Progressively growing to the current 5.5 million exhibits, since 2013 the museum's collections have been on display in these rooms or stored in the building's basement.

- 1 Naturalised specimen of Eurasian griffon vulture (Gyps fulvus), listed as number 1 in the Trento museum's nineteenth-century catalogue, compiled by Francesco Ambrosi.
- 2 Entomological box from the beetle collection of Agostino Gressel, a good example of the nineteenth-century collections that came together in the city museum.
- 3 Ancient finds from the mineralogical collection; some may date back to the late eighteenth-century collection of the Trento canon Ferdinando Taxis.
- 4 Reptile specimens preserved in liquid from the herpetological collection, prepared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries



Displays arranged according to systematic criteria have been the norm in science museums for at least two centuries and are still widespread. The exhibitions in our museum were no exception throughout the twentieth century. Later, we preferred to use an ecological criterion, as in the current exhibition, going from high altitude to the valley floor. These historical photos show the museum's permanent rooms, inaugurated in 1981 in Palazzo Sardagna, organised by biological systematics.

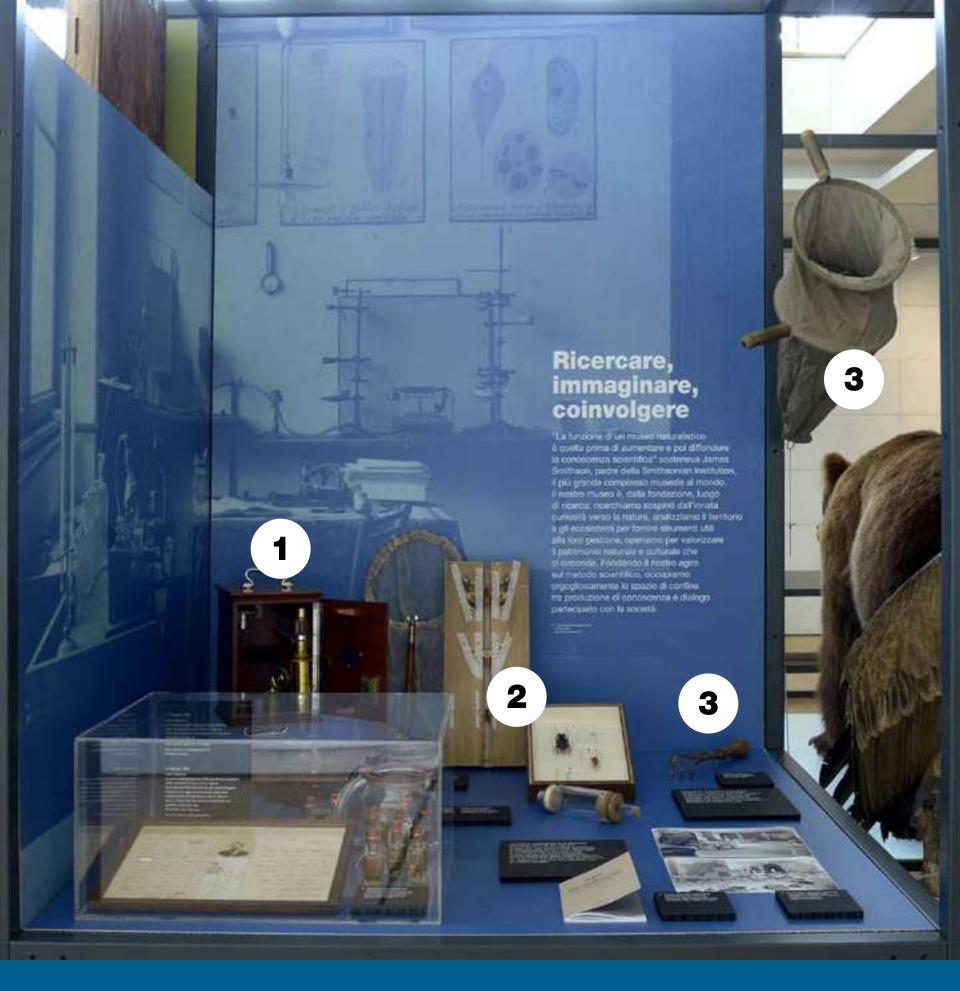
"Lectern" display cases with systematic museum layout in the via Verdi location, circa 1960 - 1970 (MUSE Archive)



Research, imagine, involve

"The function of a nature museum is first to increase and then to disseminate scientific knowledge," maintained James Smithson, father of the Smithsonian Institution, the largest museum complex in the world. Since its foundation, our museum has been a place of research: we research driven by an innate curiosity for nature, we analyse the territory and ecosystems to provide useful tools for their management, we work to enhance the natural-cultural heritage that surrounds us. We proudly occupy the borderline between production of knowledge and participated dialogue with society founding our actions on the scientific method.

The museum's microscopy laboratory, 1922 (photo G.B. Unterweger)



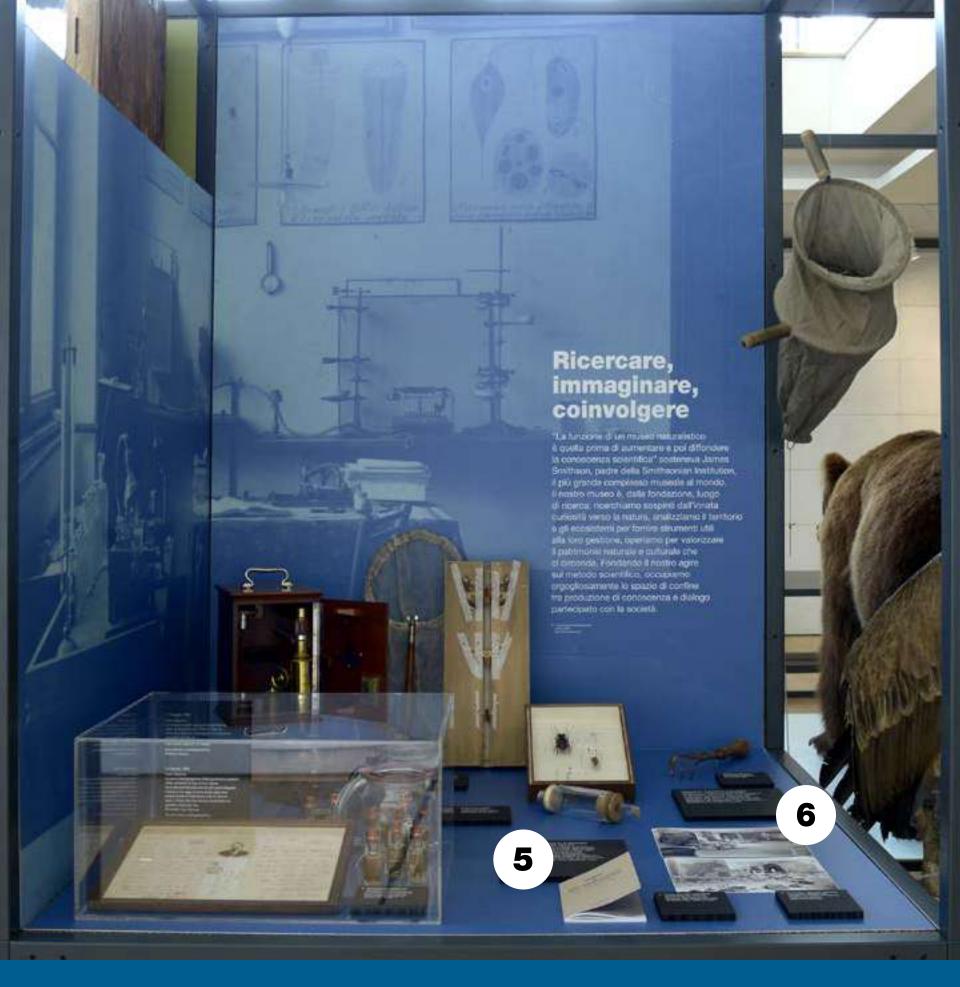
Exploring the territory and our collections, researchers analyse living organisms and artefacts as evidence of processes. Embracing the original spirit of naturalistic analysis, oriented towards the integrated reading of biological and abiotic data, we have been studying ecosystems for more than a century, with focus on mountain ecosystems.

- Microscope in travel case that belonged to Giacomo Bresadola, renowned mycologist and conservator for botany and mycology from 1922 to 1924.
- 2 A butterfly spreading board and catching net, first half of the twentieth century Glass insect pooter with entomological travel box, first half of the twentieth century.
- 3 Field sieve and weeder belonging to Tullio Perini, entomological technician at the museum from 1933 to 1966.



Scientific research is a collective enterprise. Field activities, acquisition and study of collections, and data analysis are carried out by the museum in collaboration with a vast network of professionals and enthusiasts. The naturalist Giovanni Canestrini, the first translator of Darwin's works, was a great inspiration for the community of Trentino naturalists who brought our museum to life.

4 Correspondence between Giovanni Canestrini and Charles Darwin with some specimens from the arachnology collection donated by Canestrini to the Trento museum in 1876.



Our institution primarily preserves and exhibits collections that document the local area. Thanks to permanent and temporary exhibitions, we have always told the story of a place of research and reflection on the present that creates dialogue between science, nature, and society.

- 5 Guide to the exhibition rooms published in 1930 by Giovanni Battista Trener, museum director from 1922 to 1932 and from 1946 to 1954.
- 6 The "Utilised Minerals and Rocks" exhibition set up by the museum in 1956 in Palazzo Pretorio in Trento (photo F.lli Pedrotti).



Stories that dig deep

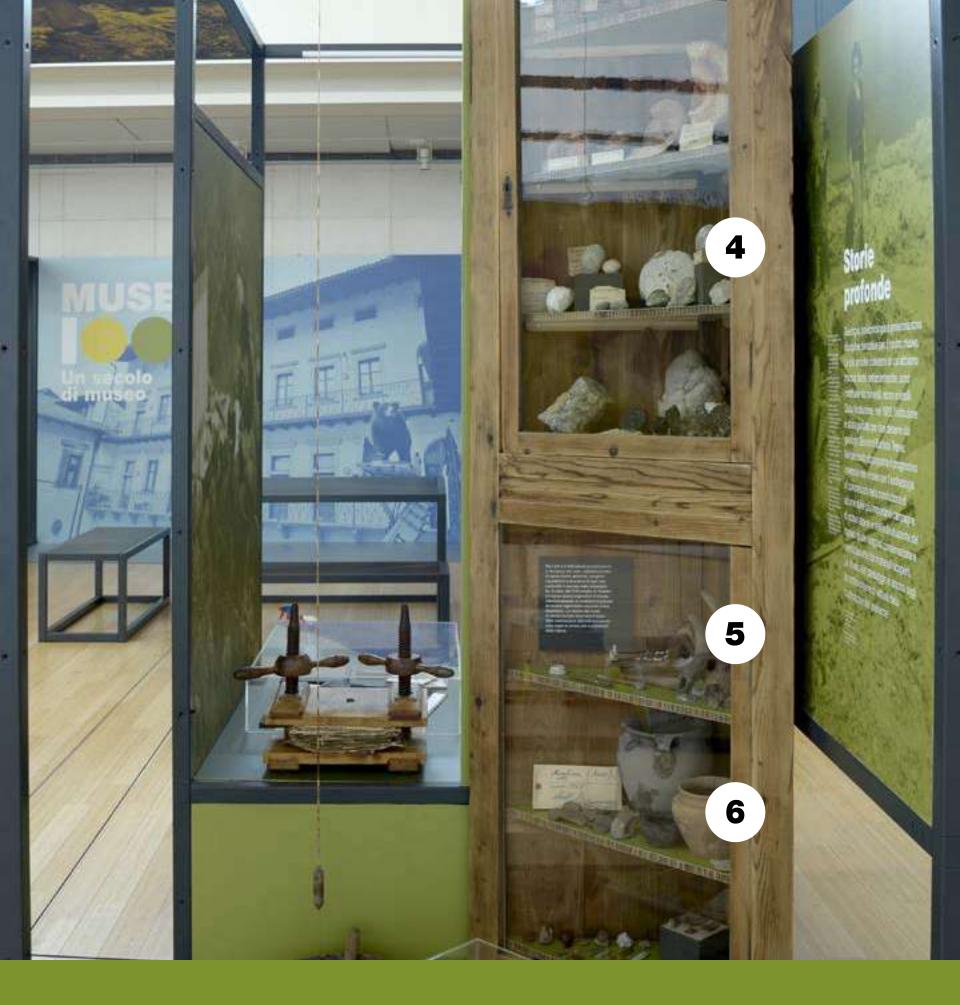
Geology, palaeontology and prehistory are foundational disciplines for our museum. The oldest collections of which we have evidence, dating back to the late eighteenth century, consist of minerals, rocks, and fossils. After its foundation in 1922, for two decades the museum was headed by the geologist Giovanni Battista Trener. After the Second World War, the museum's progressive interest in archaeology took the form of some of the most important excavation campaigns in the Alps, identifying the museum as a place for the preservation and valorisation of the materials discovered. Study of the landscape is still today our key to construction of the present.

First excavation campaign at the Lake Ledro Pile-Dwellings, 1961 (photo Gino Tomasi)



In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, private individuals in Europe collected and stored works of art, antiquities, natural specimens and curiosities of all kinds in the so-called wunderkammer or cabinets of wonder. These formed the basis, from the eighteenth century onwards for a new exhibition space: the museum. Once institutionalised, the collections started to be organised according to systematic criteria. The showcases of natural history museums became a place for celebration of the order imposed by human reason on the complexity of nature.

- **1** Display case belonging to the first museum layouts, 19th century.
- 2 Petrographic collection belonging to Augusto Sourdeau, first mineralogy conservator from 1922 to 1924
 Jurassic ammonite specimens from the Lavarone Plateau collected by Austro-Hungarian Army Captain Eduard Lakom between 1908 and 1912.
- 3 Fossil specimens from the Cenozoic Era in Trentino studied by Sergio Venzo, geology conservator from 1935 to 1939, and by museum collaborator Carlo Airaghi Specimens from the historical mineralogy collection, rich in specimens from the area of influence of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.



- 4 Petrographic collection belonging to Augusto Sourdeau, first mineralogy conservator from 1922 to 1924
 Jurassic ammonite specimens from the Lavarone Plateau collected by Austro-Hungarian Army Captain Eduard Lakom between 1908 and 1912.
- by Raffaello Battaglia Collection of ceramic artefacts from the Montesei di Serso site collected by Renato Perini, museum collaborator from 1966 to 1975.
- 6 Collection of flint artefacts from the Romagnano Loc III shelter under the direction of Alberto Broglio between 1971 and 1973.



Under the leadership of Giovanni Battista Trener, geology conservator and first director of the museum, numerous studies in the fields of geology and hydrology were promoted and research areas such as limnology, glaciology and speleology were set up. In 1946, the Centre for Alpine Studies of the National Research Council (CNR) was established at the museum, and Trener was appointed as its director. The Centre was given the task of "carrying out systematic research in the field of Alpine scientific problems" with particular reference to climatology and with competence over the entire Italian side of the chain.

- **7** Country notebook for topographical survey, circa 1930.
- 8 Optical microscope for analysing thin sections of geological material (endowed by Alpine Studies Centre).
- 9 Geologist's hammer belonging to Giulio Antonio Venzo (1921-2017), a long-time member of the museum's Board of Directors and President of the Trentino Natural Science Society.



Starting in the 1960s, our contribution to the study of Alpine prehistory was formalised with assignment to the museum of the coordination of several important excavation campaigns and the appointment of Gino Tomasi, the museum's director, as honorary inspector of the Soprintendenza alle Antichità delle Venezie. Working in synergy with universities and local enthusiasts, the museum began a season, which is still ongoing, of exploration, excavation and study of prehistoric sites such as Ledro, Vela di Trento, Loch di Romagnano, Vatte di Zambana, Gaban, Colbricon, and Riparo Dalmeri, right up to the recent Riparo Cornafessa. In 1972, the territorial headquarters of the Lake Ledro Pile-Dwelling Museum was inaugurated.

- 10 Archaeological excavation material (sieve, trowel, plumb bob) belonging to Bernardino Bagolini, paleethnology section conservator from 1970 to 1987.
- 11 Photo album documenting the excavations organised by the museum at the site of Riparo Gaban (Trento) in 1974.
- 12 Catalogue of the exhibition organised in 1980 by the museum 'Riparo Gaban.

 Prehistory and evolution of the environment".



Project for display cases for Trento Civic Museum, circa 1870







An idea of nature

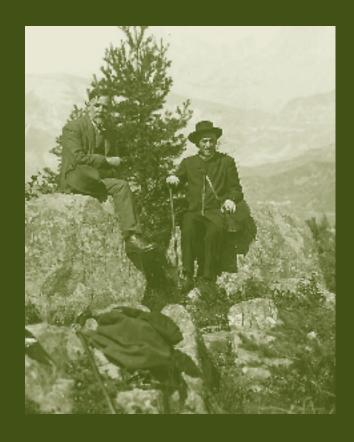
Specialised expertise in the field of nature has enabled the museum to make a decisive contribution to the knowledge of biodiversity and environments in the Autonomous Province of Trento. Our policy making stems from the idea of nature conservation as a social necessity. It is a role that we still claim today, convinced that museums, located at the intersection between the public and the government of public affairs, can make a decisive contribution to the cultural and political redefinition of relations with those different to us on the basis of a fundamental imperative: we are nature.

Some of the 1250 plates made by Giacomo Bresadola for Iconographia Mycologica, published between 1927 and 1933.



The naturalist observes, collects data and samples, analyses. A museum institutionalises this instinct to explore, classify, and interpret nature, which, systematised and operated with the rigour of the scientific method, becomes a profession and an identity value. Scientific curiosity animates our research as much as cultural programming for the public, in the desire to share the passion that drives us.

1 Field bag with pocket for preserving specimens that belonged to Giacomo Bresadola, renowned mycologist and conservator for botany and mycology from 1922 to 1924 (in the photo, with Giulio Catoni, phytopathology conservator from 1922 to 1947).





Convinced of the great opportunity to give the city of Trento a structure at the service of science and a fascinating naturalistic attraction, in 1938 the museum's board of directors entrusted a group of renowned botanists, coordinated by Lino Bonomi, museum director from 1932 to 1945, with the task of planning an Alpine botanical garden. The first territorial headquarters of the museum was then inaugurated in Viote del Monte Bondone. Thanks to the efforts of Vittorio Marchesoni, museum director from 1954 to 1964, it became one of the most important botanical gardens in the Alps.

2 Diary of activities in the year 1943, a list of planted species and some pictures of the early stages during creation of the Viote Alpine Botanical Garden.

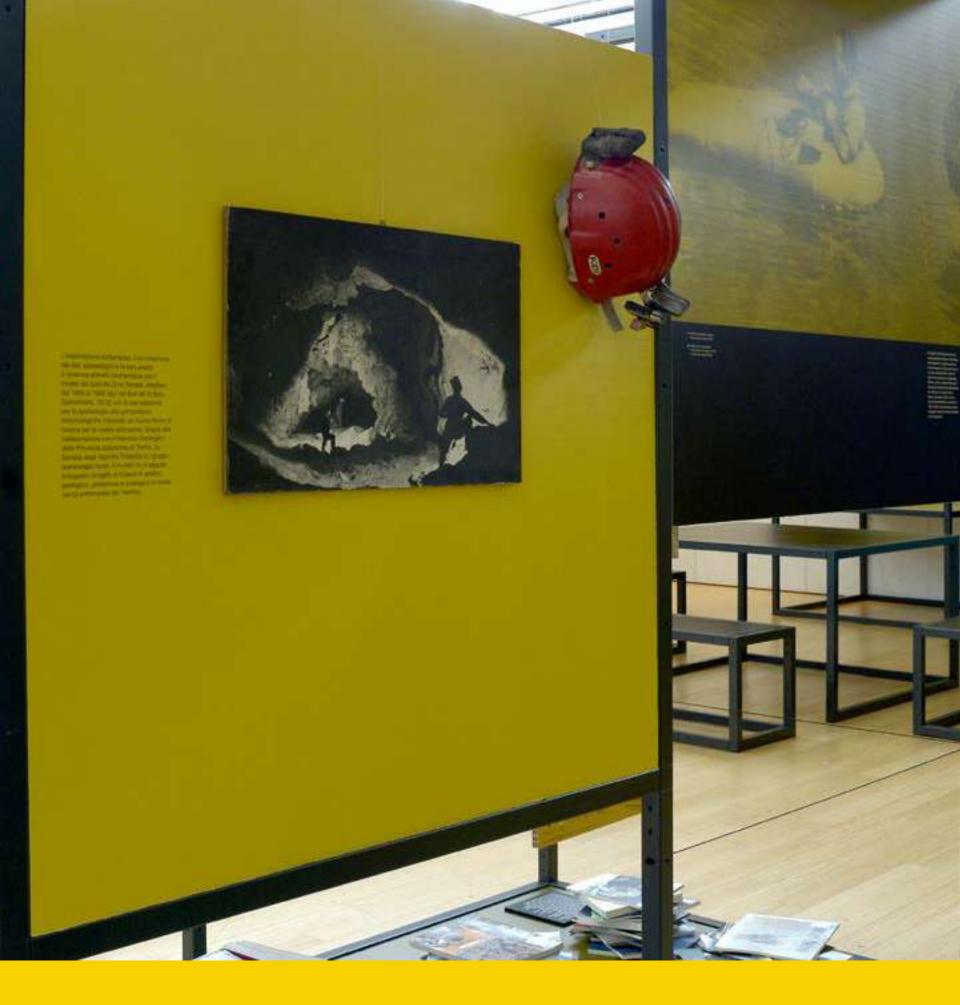


Protecting nature has been a priority objective for the museum's work for decades: from field research, aimed at documenting and assessing the state of conservation of biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems, to the organisation of conferences, courses, exhibitions, and popular events, and the drafting of bills establishing parks, nature reserves, and biotopes. Still today, we are committed to providing knowledge and management guidance for citizens and institutions, such as for the Networks of Reserves in the Autonomous Province of Trento.

- **3** Historical press for preparing herbarium samples.
- 4 Specimens preserved in alcohol and leather collected as part of projects for studying and monitoring the fauna in Trentino. Where possible, trapping is now replaced by non-invasive techniques such as camera trapping.
- 5 Publications containing protectionist regulations drawn up in collaboration with the museum and the Trentino-Alto Adige Natural Science Society, 1956-1963.



Benedetto Bonapace during a photo shoot in the Monte Bondone Alpine Botanical Gardens (photo Gino Tomasi).



Subterranean exploration, the archiving of speleological data and relative analysis has become a characteristic activity for the museum since Gino Tomasi, director from 1965 to 1992 (here in Bus de la Spia, Sporminore, 1972), combined his passion for speleology with entomological expertise, initiating a new line of research for our institution. Thanks to collaboration with the Geological Service of the Autonomous Province of Trento, the Society of Trento Mountaineers and local speleological groups, the museum subsequently developed research projects in the geological, prehistoric and zoological fields in many underground caves in Trentino.



The museum's interest in hydrology and climate studies after the Second World War was structured into a line of glaciological research. The geographer Giuseppe Morandini, special commissioner for the museum from 1945 to 1946, promoted the construction of observatories and study stations in the middle and high mountains, such as in Val di Genova, initiating a programme for monitoring climate and glaciology. Studies on glacial evolution, whose relevance is amplified by the current climate crisis, are still carried out by the museum together with the Society of Trento Mountaineers under the coordination of the Forecasting and Planning Office of the Autonomous Province of Trento.

Expedition to Lake Lares in Val di Genova, 1976 (photo Mario Cont).



Since the very beginning of the museum's scientific activities, limnology and hydrobiology studies have enjoyed a solid continuity. From the thirties onwards, the museum conducted studies in numerous lakes in Trentino such as Levico and Caldonazzo, Molveno, Ledro, in the high altitude basins of the Adamello-Presanella and Brenta Groups, and at Tovel where, under the impetus of Lino Bonomi, director from 1932 to 1945 and then Vittorio Marchesoni, director from 1954 to 1964, the museum was for decades engaged in research, educational, and enhancement activities.

Vittorio Marchesoni, museum director from 1954 to 1963.



Carlo Lona, museum entomology conservator from 1941 to 1943, with Joseph Müller.

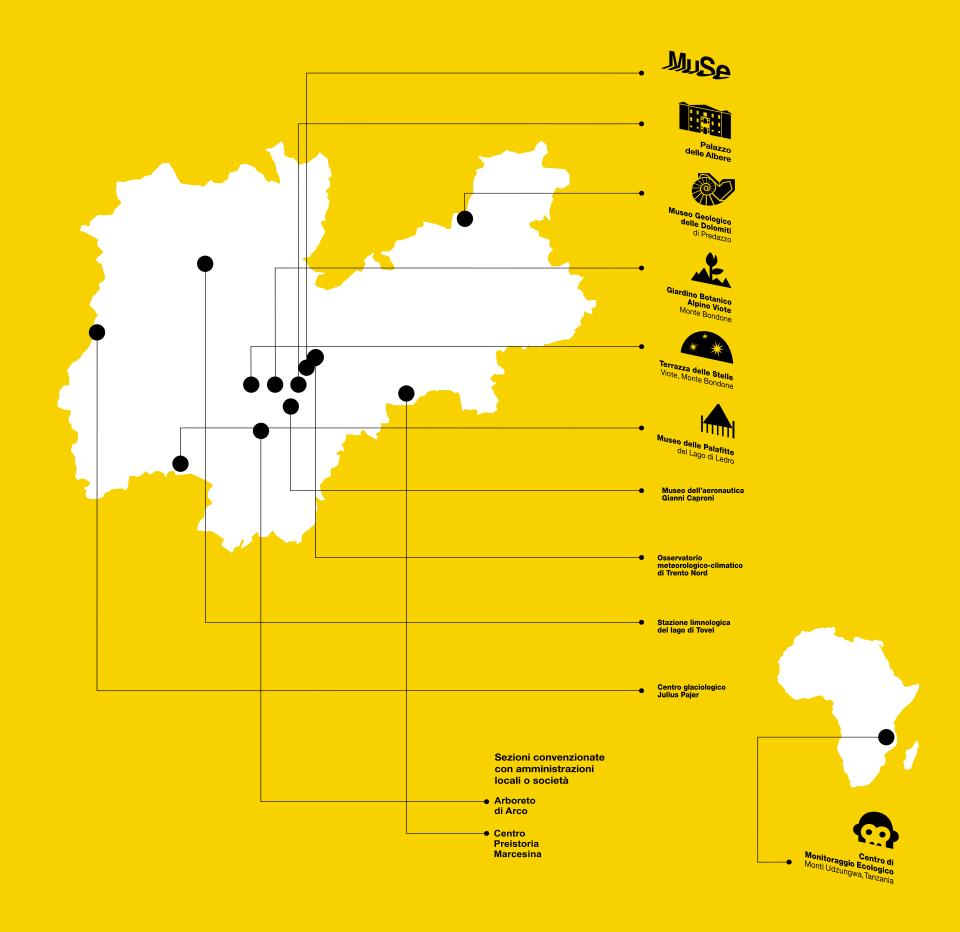


Education, pleasure, sharing

"Museums should constantly ask themselves," warned museologist Gail Anderson, "whether their founding values resonate with those of society". Museums are in fact simultaneously an expression of society and at its service. The programmes for the public developed by the museum, based on scientific rigour, are guided by the cardinal criteria of accessibility and inclusiveness: exhibitions, educational activities, and participatory projects offer diversified experiences for education, pleasure, reflection, and the sharing of knowledge.



Since the nineties, temporary exhibitions have become a fundamental element of museum life. They marked the start of experimentation with the interactive and multimedia approach that characterises the permanent exhibition today. Temporary exhibitions broke through the naturalistic thematic horizon and blazed the trail for interdisciplinary and multi-lingual research. In 1995, the museum employed an education manager specifically for the production of experiences for schools. These two transformations were to set a new course for the museum, increasingly visitor-centric.



Who makes a museum?

The MUSE is a well-structured space for participation. We are a network of sites and affiliated centres where more than 250 people work in dialogue with people and institutions, with the scientific community, companies, the third sector and all those who recognise in the museum an opportunity to meet, dialogue, and grow. The museum is built, on a daily basis, by those who bring it alive. Like you, right now.



Citizen Science focuses on the value of each person's contribution to the evolution of knowledge and it is adopted by the MUSE for its relevance in the educational, social, and scientific fields. It is a tool for developing a critical and civic sense, in the name of science as a common good, democratic, open, and accessible to all. Every year we develop research projects with anyone who wants to get involved.

You can also get started by following our Facebook group dedicated to understanding the nature that surrounds us.

- 1 Research kit for schools for the "Mosquito Alert Italia" project, a scientific research project that directly involves citizens.
- 2 Atlas of Mammals in the Province of Trento (2018) compiled by the museum also thanks to non-systematic voluntary reports. We are now working on the Atlas of Amphibians and Reptiles!



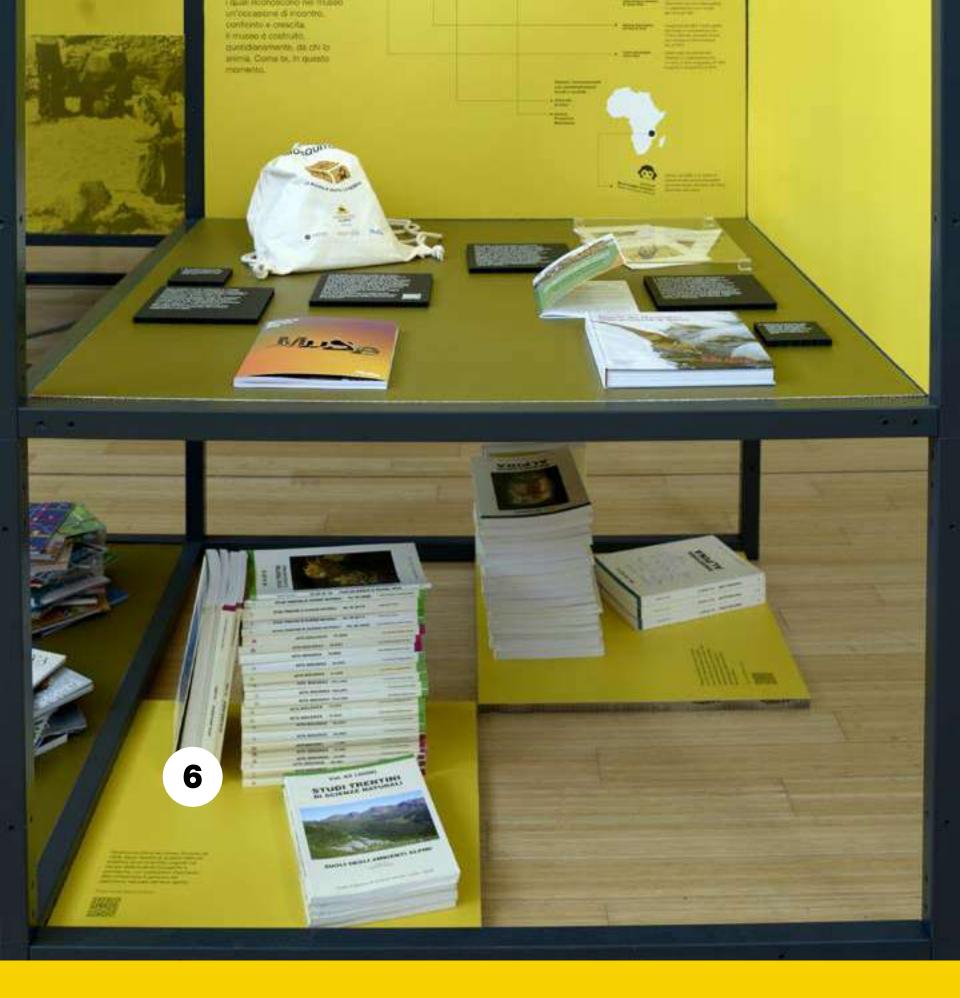
In 1948, the Natural Science Society of Trentino-Alto Adige was founded, the 'offspring' of our museum, as the director Giovanni Battista Trener wrote. The Society still works today for the knowledge and protection of nature by publishing a Bulletin, since 1954 called Natura Alpina. Our museum's story is also closely linked to other associations, with whom we have pursued our mission, such as the 'Giacomo Bresadola' Mycology Group, the 'G.A. Scopoli' Mineralogy and Paleontology Group and the 'Association of Trentino Astrophiles'.



With its mission statement, our museum details how we fulfil our cultural and social function while respecting economic, environmental, and accessibility responsibilities. This report expresses the wellbeing generated in the community by pursuing our mission in synergy with all our stakeholders. It is a tool for telling our story and an opportunity to show the complexity of our museum-organism.

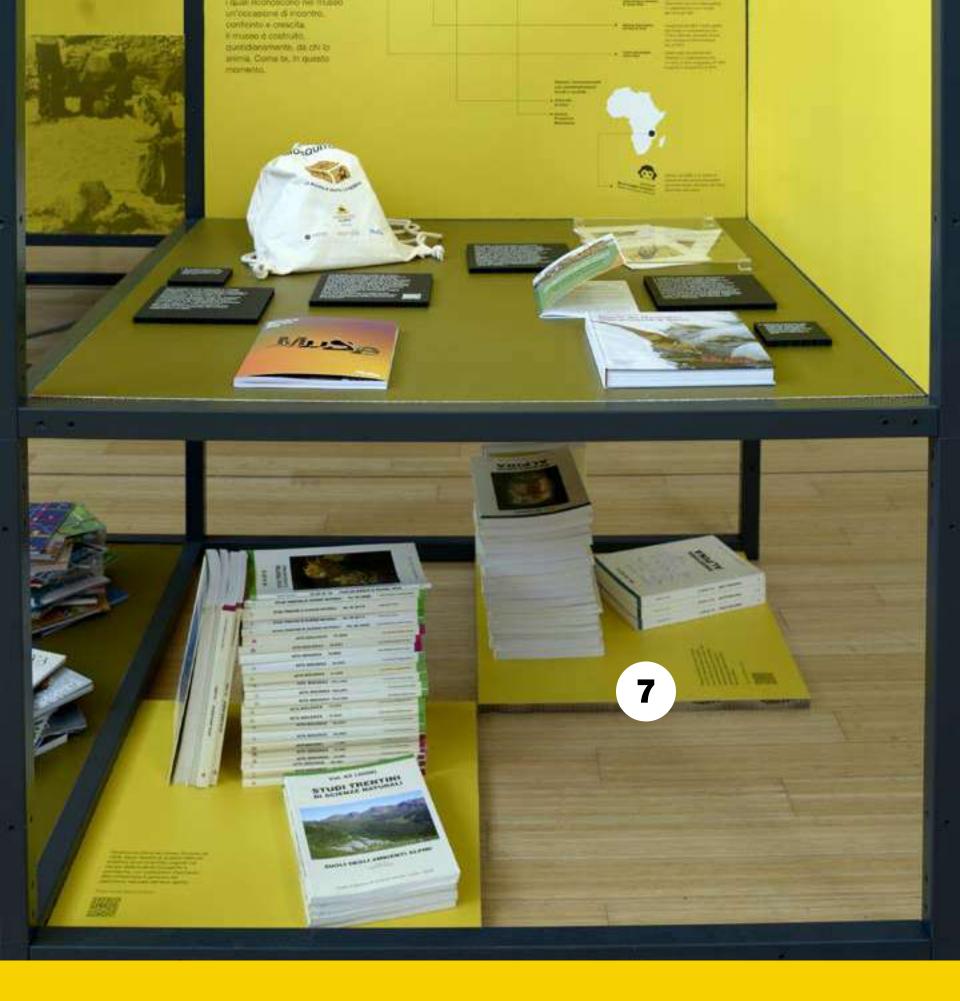


The museum questions the urgent issues posed by our times. Our intention is to elaborate new forms of knowledge and new paths of interpretation on the eco-cultural transformation we are experiencing through research and artistic practices, reformulating the relationship between humanity and nature in an ecosystemic sense, and also supporting activist demands such as those expressed in these Recommendations drawn up by the Trentino Youth Climate Conference.



Founded in 1926, the museum's scientific journal *Studi Trentini di Scienze Naturali* publishes original scientific works in the field of biological and geological sciences, with particular reference to the knowledge and management of the natural heritage of the Alpine chain.

You can consult it online



Founded in 1963, the museum's scientific journal *Preistoria Alpina* publishes original scientific works in the field of prehistoric sciences, with particular reference to paleethnological and palaeoenvironmental documentation of the Alpine chain.

You can consult it online

What will the future of the museum be like?

The museum is shaped by local and global, internal and external, singular and plural, individual and collective changes.

How do you imagine the future of the museum in 10 or 100 years?

Tell us here with a word, a short sentence or a drawing!



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The inspiration and content for this exhibition come from the book Per l'idea di natura – Storia del Museo di Scienze Naturali di Trento by Gino Tomasi, museum director from 1965 to 1992 (published by Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali, 2010).





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