Collecting Specimens in a National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Research Specimen Collection and Preservation

Help us make the most of your science!

In 1934, botanist Elmer Applegate never dreamed his field notes at Crater Lake National Park would answer questions nearly 80 years later. In 2010, puzzled by two obviously different specimens with the exact same location, identification, and collection numbers typed on their labels, the herbarium curator searched for answers in the park collections. Fortunately, a close inspection of Mr. Applegate's carefully archived field notebooks solved the mystery.

As a researcher, your work can make a significant and lasting contribution to science and conservation in the park. But only if future scientists know about your work and can find it! By carefully following research permit guidelines on the RPRS website, your research adds a valuable piece to the intricate puzzle of what park ecosystems contain—and, just as importantly, how they change over time. This is the value of park museum and archive collections.

The Big Picture: Conducting Research in Parks

While not all researchers collect specimens, all research in a park must follow guidelines on the Research Permit and Reporting System (RPRS) website. Any specimen collection, including by NPS staff, must follow RPRS guidelines.

In a nutshell, you are responsible for following the detailed guidance on RPRS for each of these steps:

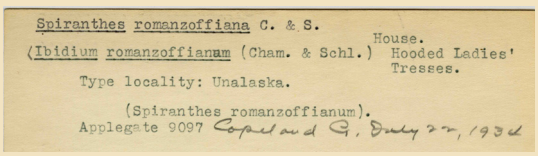
1. Create an Investigator Account in RPRS.
2. Apply for a research permit.
3. Closely review and follow all guidelines for research and specimen collecting.
4. Submit the Investigator's Annual Report every year.
5. Update the park curator annually about the status of your specimens.
6. Submit final report and products.

Key Reminders

This brief highlights key compliance steps when collecting specimens in a park

When applying for the permit…

- Be sure to closely review these documents on the *Help Topics* page for RPRS:
  - General Conditions for Scientific Research and Collecting Permit
  - Research and Collecting Permit FAQs
- Be sure to select "specimens will be collected" even if they will be consumed in the research process.


Spiranthes romanzoffiana C. & S.
(Ibidium romanzoffianam (Cham. & Schl.) House.
Hooded Ladies' Tresses.
Type locality: Unalaska.
(Spiranthes romanzoffianum).
Applegate 9097 Copeland G., July 7-, 1934

When collecting specimens in the field…

- Be sure to collect all the metadata you'll need to report later, including *specimen identification*, *collection location*, *date*, *collector*, and *permit number.*
- Be sure to label your specimens completely per your discipline's best practices.

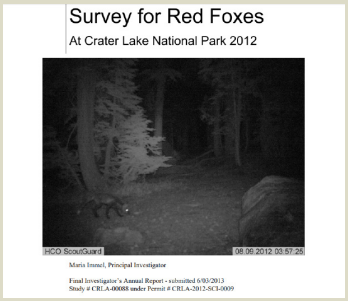


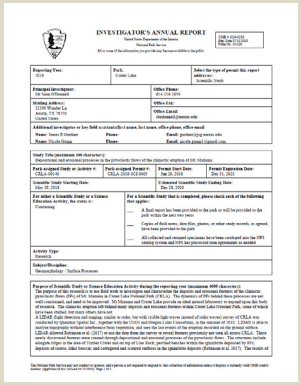




When writing the annual report (IAR)…

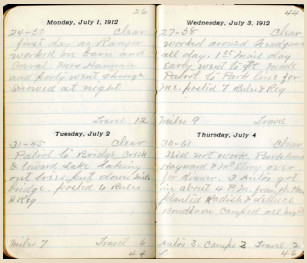
- Be sure to submit an annual report for **each year** of a multiyear project, regardless of whether you conducted research that year. Continue reporting until specimens are accounted for in the NPS museum property system and the project is complete.
- Also, update the curator annually on the status of collected specimens until they are consumed or cataloged in the NPS museum property system.





When organizing your data…

- Be sure to make regular, secure backups of your digital data.
- Contact park curator to ensure that you meet NPS specimen labeling, cataloging, and repository requirements.

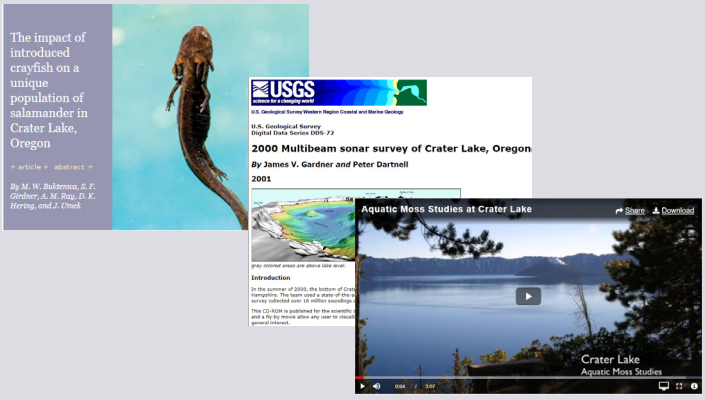




When your research is complete…

- Be sure to send the park any results, such as reports, publications, or links to other media.
- Be sure to upload data, reports, and publications to the NPS Integrated Resources Management Applications (IRMA) portal following instructions.

All information and specimens collected in national parks permanently remain US government property.



Questions?

Contact: NPS Museum Management Program
nps_museums@nps.gov

