

NPA



Assembled skeleton of *Allosaurus fragilis*
Upper Jurassic, Tithonian
U.S.A. (border lands between Utah and Wyoming)





HISTORY

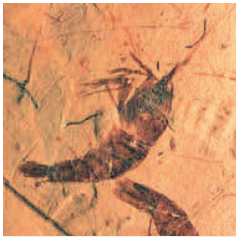
The *Museo di Paleontologia* (the Museum of Palaeontology) is located on the western side of the 17th century Saints Marcellino and Festo monastic complex. It is bordered by the monumental, now deconsecrated, church originally dedicated to these two saints, and by the elegant late-16th century Cloisters. Some of the Museum's rooms are paved with majolica tiles of exceptional quality created by Neapolitan master majolica tile makers ("*maestri reggiolari*"). The Museum of Palaeontology was founded in 1932. Its first director was Geremia D'Erasmus whose efforts were instrumental in bringing to the Museum the Paleontological collections and specimens acquired, on the one hand, by Matteo Tondi and Arcangelo Scacchi at the beginning of the 19th century, when they were directors of the Royal

Museum of Mineralogy, and on the other, by Guglielmo Guiscardi and Francesco Bassani, directors of the Geological Museum, founded in 1860 but now no longer in existence. The Paleontological collections were then further enriched by other interesting specimens sent by various researchers to the Museum as study materials to Professor D'Erasmus, which then remained as part of the Museum's holdings. The Museum's exhibition space of about 800 square metres is organised over several rooms and halls, some of which embellished by the splendid majolica flooring, all furnished with modern glass display cabinets.



Pictured:
Geremia D'Erasmus (1887-1962)

Housing about 46,000 items, the Museum of Palaeontology provides unparalleled evidence of the flora and fauna which had lived on our planet since the Palaeozoic Era. Of the historic collections of invertebrate specimens, especially worth the visitor's attention are the Mollusc Collection found in the Pliocenic clays from Gravina in Puglia sampled and studied by Arcangelo Scacchi during the 1840s, and the Collection compiled by Oronzio Gabriele Costa, an extraordinarily gifted scientist from Campania, consisting of 1616 glass vessels containing Neogene and Quaternary foraminifera and ostracods. Some of the Museum's most prized exhibits, unique for their extraordinary state of preservation, come from Ichthyolith deposits in Campania, from Giffoni Valle Piana, Castellammare di Stabia and Pietrarroia, which range between 290 and 115 Million years old. Oronzio Gabriele Costa's Collection of Fossils, which he gathered from various locations in Central and Southern Italy, and was purchased by the Geological Museum between 1861 and 1873, is of considerable interest and value. There are other collections of Plio-pleistocene vertebrates found in Central Southern Italy acquired by the Museum thanks to Angiola Maria Maccagno, D'Erasmus's successor as Museum Director. In the *Sala Capitolare*, with its splendid 18th century majolica tiled flooring designed by Giuseppe Massa, the exhibits on display include some extraordinary 230 million-year-old Ichthyosaurs, marine reptiles found in Germany and a cast of a *Plesiosaurus Hawkinsi* taken from the original specimen in the British Museum



COLLECTIONS



Pictured:
Palaemon vesolensis
Monte Vesole (Salerno)
Late Cretaceous



COLLECTIONS

in London. This splendid Hall also houses the suspended skeleton of an *Allosaurus fragilis*, a carnivorous dinosaur living 135 million years ago, found in North America. In the side display cabinets, one can see, among other exhibits, the skull of a *Dyrosaurus* sp., an ancestor of the modern crocodile, a stone slab containing two early cretaceous marine reptiles from China of the *Hyphalosaurus lingyanensis* species, as well as fresh-water terrapin specimens dating from the Oligocene era found in Monteviale, Vicenza. Flying reptiles are represented by a fine suspended cast of an *Anhanguera santanae*. Also of interest are the skull, complete with defensive tusks, of the *Elephas antiquus italicus*, found in 1949 in the Pleistocene deposits in Valle del Liri in Lazio and acquired by Giuseppe De Lorenzo, as well as the practically complete skeleton of the *Metaxytherium medium*, a marine mammal belonging to the Sirenidae family, found in the Province of Vibo Valentia in Calabria. Recent acquisitions include the magnificent skull of the *Platybelodon* sp., considered the ancestor of the modern elephant, the skull of a primitive horse thought to belong to the species *Hipparion placodus* and the cast of a young mammoth found in an excellent state of preservation in the permafrost of the Siberian tundra, the original of which is on display at the Glacier Garden Museum in Lucerne, Switzerland. The Museum also has a fine collection of plant fossils of which the magnificent fossil palm *Latanites*, found in the Tertiary era deposits in Bolca, Veneto, with its trunk and leaf structure perfectly preserved, is particularly noteworthy.



Pictured:
Ammonites solarioides
Lias, Gran Sasso (Italy)



- 1) Eggs of Saurian Dinosaur
Shangtung (China)
Cretaceous (approximately 135 - 65 million of years old)
- 2) *Crocota crocuta spelaea*
Castellana, Bari (Italy)
Late Pleistocene
- 3) Skull of *Elephas antiquus italicus*
Liri Valley (Italy)
Riss/Würm Interglacial (approximately 130,000 years old)
- 4) Slab containing numerous specimens of *Asaphus* sp trilobite fossils
(Morocco)

