



MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

*Mounted skeleton
of the Indian "Elephant of Portici"*





HISTORY

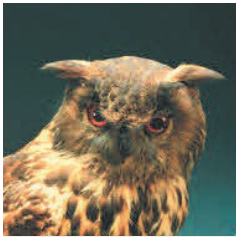
The **Museo Zoologico** (the Museum of Zoology) was founded in 1813 by Gioacchino Murat, the King of Naples at the time. Its first Director was the naturalist Luigi Petagna who was able to obtain rooms within the Jesuit *Collegio Massimo* to house the Museum. A number of the collections from the Natural History Section of the Royal Bourbon Museum founded by Ferdinando IV in 1777 were thus transferred here. The current Museum premises with their magnificent furnishings of walnut and maple took shape thanks to the success of Giosuè Sangiovanni in obtaining substantial funds from the Bourbon King Ferdinando II, which made possible the creation of two elegant exhibition halls, known as the *Salone Maggiore* (the Great Hall) and the *Salone Minore* (the Small Hall). These were inaugurated in 1845 on the occasion of the Seventh

Congress of Italian Scientists. These premises were also used to house the valuable collections from the *Museo di Anatomia Generale e Patologica* (the General Anatomy and Pathology Museum), which may still be admired there today. Over the years the Museum has been directed by distinguished scientists, such as Achille Costa, Paolo Panceri, Salvatore Trinchese and Saverio Monticelli, all seeking to advance the study of zoology and to further expand the Museum's collections, both by introducing pieces used in their own work and by means of exchanges and purchases. The eminent scientists Oronzio Gabriele Costa and Stefano delle Chiaje should also be mentioned for their donations to the Museum. The Museum's exhibition space covers about 1200 square metres, consisting in an entrance hall leading into the *Salone Maggiore* which in turn leads on to the *Salone Minore*.



Pictured:
Giosuè Sangiovanni (1775-1849)

The Museum possesses around 230,000 specimens of great historical and scientific interest, some of which are on public display while others are preserved in rooms not open to the general public due to the fragility of the specimens concerned. Although all classes of the Animal Kingdom are represented, Mammals and Birds are the most numerous. The central part of the *Salone Maggiore* Hall hosts a long sequence of splendid skeletons of Large Mammals among which a male Indian Elephant donated to King Carlo of Bourbon in 1742 by Mohamed V, Sultan of the Ottoman Turks and kept in the Portici Palace until 1756; complete skeletons of, firstly, a Northern Right Whale captured in the 'Mar Grande' of Taranto in 1877, the only exemplar of its kind ever found in the Mediterranean and, secondly, of a Minke Whale donated to the Museum in 1847 by Stefano Delle Chiaje. The imposing display cabinets contain around one thousand taxidermied animals, many of which formed part of the Museum's collection from its beginnings. In this context we should note the two precious mummified heads of Nile Crocodiles obtained by Paolo Panceri at El-Maabdeh in Middle Egypt during the scientific expedition of 1873-74. There are also many specimens of animals in grave danger of extinction or which are already extinct such as a Philippines Flying Lemur, a Hog Deer, a female Okapi (an extremely rare African ungulate only discovered at the beginning of the 20th century), a Rothschild's Giraffe calf, a Norfolk Ground Dove and a Crescent Nail-tail Wallaby. Some historical exhibits have been restored and displayed



COLLECTIONS



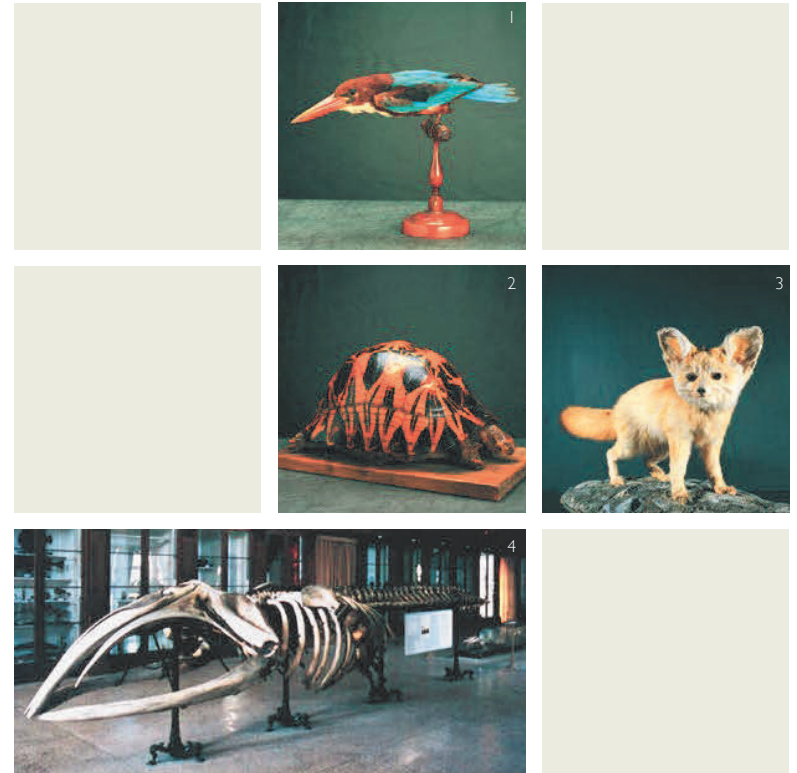
Pictured:
Eagle Owl
Place of origin: Capodimonte, Naples (Italy)



in dioramas reproducing their natural habitats. The different environments reconstructed in this way include a reproduction of an African Savannah habitat where one can see a pair of Lions, acquired by the Museum before 1845, which do not belong to any of the common African sub-species; as well as a reconstruction of an Arctic scene containing a fine example of a Polar Bear and a small Arctic Fox, and several other dioramas among which the attractive one created in 1990 depicting an interesting coastal marsh habitat in a protected area close to the mouth of the Volturno River. In the *Salone Minore* Hall, an extremely valuable bird collection donated in 1937 by Dr Mario Schettino is on display including specimens of an Eagle Owl and a female Sparrow Hawk, both originating from areas within the City of Naples. A number of specimens from the Mediterranean Malacological Collection are also housed here, exhibited in show-cases and display cabinets providing an exhaustive documentation of the species of Molluscs living in the Mediterranean, as are exemplars of insects from the Achille Costa Entomological Collection, which continues still today to be consulted by researchers from around the world requesting access to specimens. Corals and Madrepores, forming part of the Vettor Pisani Collection, collected in the Red Sea during Paolo Panceri's scientific expeditions to Egypt, can be seen in the central display cabinets. The splendid Giant Clam exemplar from the Indian Ocean is also well worth a visit.



Pictured:
Corallium rubrum
Place of origin: Sardinia (Italy)



- 1) Kingfisher
Place of origin: Smyrna (Turkey)
- 2) *Aepyceceros melamphus*
Place of origin: Zoological Gardens of Naples (Italy)
- 3) Fennec (*Vulpes zerda*)
Place of origin: Africa, N Arabia
- 4) Mounted skeleton of the "Whale of Taranto"

