



# Cleveland Museum of Natural History Announces Three New Additions to Curatorial Staff

*Curators to advance research and conservation efforts in biodiversity and ornithology*

**CLEVELAND, OH—May 28, 2026**—The Cleveland Museum of Natural History is pleased to announce the appointment of three new curators to its interdisciplinary team of scientists, strengthening the Museum's role as a leading research institution and expanding the scientific expertise it brings to Northeast Ohio. The appointments reflect the Museum's continued investment in research, collections stewardship, public engagement, and its broader work in service to science.

Beginning this summer, the Museum welcomes Dr. Miranda Sinnott-Armstrong as Curator of Botany, Dr. Walter Paulin Tapondjou Nkonmeneck as Curator of Biodiversity, and Dr. Ethan Gyllenhaal as Curator of Ornithology.

"These three outstanding curators represent the next chapter for Cleveland Museum of Natural History", said Meenakshi Sharma, Acting President and CEO. "Selected through a rigorous national search, they each bring depth of expertise that will strengthen our collections, deepen community engagement, and advance scientific scholarship for years to come."

## **Miranda Sinnott-Armstrong, Ph.D., Curator of Botany**

Dr. Miranda Sinnott-Armstrong holds a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Yale University. She joins the Museum from Duke University, where she most recently served as a Postdoctoral Research Assistant. Dr. Sinnott-Armstrong's research focuses on the biology of color in plants, particularly how traits like fruit and flower coloration evolve through interactions with animals and the environment. She brings a strong collections-based research approach, having worked extensively with herbaria around the world and contributed to advancing macroecological and evolutionary understanding of plant diversity.



“As a scientist who is also passionate about education, it was an easy decision to join the Cleveland Museum of Natural History,” said Dr. Sinnott-Armstrong. “I look forward to growing the Museum’s collection and advancing my research as a Curator of Botany.”

**Walter Paulin Tapondjou Nkonmeneck, Ph.D., Curator of Biodiversity**

Dr. Walter Paulin Tapondjou Nkonmeneck holds a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Kansas and brings more than a decade of global research and field experience in wildlife biology and conservation genetics. Dr. Tapondjou has led international research efforts, contributed to major conservation initiatives, and most recently served as an Assistant Professor of Wildlife and Conservation Science at East Texas A&M University. His work integrates genomics, phylogenetics, and field-based research to understand the mechanisms driving biodiversity and species adaptation across ecosystems.

“After more than a decade of experience in the field, I’m excited to call the Cleveland Museum of Natural History home as a Curator of Biodiversity,” said Dr. Tapondjou. “I look forward to furthering my research goal alongside the incredible scientists in Cleveland.”

**Ethan Gyllenhaal, Ph.D., Curator of Ornithology**

Dr. Ethan Gyllenhaal holds a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of New Mexico. He joins the Museum from Texas Tech University and Cornell University, where he most recently served as a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow. With a focus on evolutionary ornithology and genomics, Dr. Gyllenhaal’s research explores how geography shapes genetic diversity and speciation, using a combination of natural history collections, computational modeling, and fieldwork.

"My lifelong passion for birding and museums inspired me to pursue scientific research, and I am thrilled to start as Curator of Ornithology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. I am excited to continue my research on bird evolution while building the collections that will help us understand the changing world we live in."

The appointments of Drs. Sinnott-Armstrong, Tapondjou, and Gyllenhaal represent an exciting step forward for the Museum and its continued commitment to excellence in scientific research, education and public engagement—In Service to Science.

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## About the Cleveland Museum of Natural History

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History illuminates the world around us and inspires visitors to engage with the natural forces that shape their lives. Since its founding in 1920, the Museum has pioneered scientific research to advance knowledge across diverse fields of study and used its outstanding collections, which encompass millions of artifacts and specimens, to deepen the public's understanding of the dynamic connections between humans and nature. Through its Natural Areas Program, the Museum stewards more than 12,500 acres of protected ecosystems across northern Ohio. A community gathering place, educational center, and research institution, the Museum is a vital resource that serves Cleveland and the nation. For more information, visit [CMNH.org](http://CMNH.org).

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