

## Institute wants to hear from Suttkus fish collectors

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The late Royal D. Suttkus built the fish collection named in his honor into a multimillion-specimen collection at the Tulane University Biodiversity Research Institute. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Thanks to a [National Science Foundation grant](#), more than 50 years" worth of field documentation of important research collecting may be recreated at the [Tulane University Biodiversity Research Institute \(TUBRI\)](#), home of the [Royal D. Suttkus Fish Collection](#).

In September, NSF awarded TUBRI \$300,310 to restore the field notes of the late

biology professor Royal Suttikus, whose tireless work resulted in the collection of more than 7 million fish specimens between 1950 and 2005. Suttikus' original notes were destroyed when Hurricane Katrina passed over his home in Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

But, says TUBRI director and collection curator [Henry L. "Hank" Bart Jr.](#), many of the student researchers who accompanied him may have notes of their own.

"The field notes document conditions of capture of the specimen, conditions that are not well documented in the information on the label" of the jar where the specimen is stored, Bart says. These conditions include air and water temperature. "It was Suttikus' intention to donate his field notes to the museum."

The grant will fund a "document technician" for three years, who will contact alumni and anyone else who worked with Suttikus to find out if they can contribute their own field notes to the project.

Bart says TUBRI started identifying collectors even before the staff applied for the grant. "We have already secured notes from a lot of people," he says. "These were people that we knew made a lot of collections with Suttikus. We can cross-reference all the people that collected with them" and eliminate any overlapping names.

"Through that process, we hope to narrow it down to just the people we have to contact," Bart says, adding that he hopes the project will be complete within the three-year period.

Any alumnus who worked with [Royal D. Suttikus](#) and has field notes to share is encouraged to contact TUBRI. [Read more about the project here.](#)