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Growth of Collections at the Vilnius University's Zoology Museum during 1803–1842

In this paper we will present new facts about the contributions of well-known scientists to the growth and development of the collections at the Vilnius University Zoological Museum in the beginning of the 19th century. For a long time, the zoological collection, together with others, were kept in two small dark rooms of the Vilnius University's medical faculty building (*Collegium medicum*) on Pilies Street. During 1803–1832, Vilnius University underwent many transformations. It was reorganized into the Imperial Vilnius University of the Russian Empire. More emphasis was placed on the development of the medical and natural sciences. Well-known European scientists were invited to teach those subjects. New science cabinets (museum study collections) were established in the fields of mineralogy, anatomy, zoology, physics and surgery, among others.

From 1787–1824, the Natural History Cabinet was actively developed by the professor of botany and zoology Stanisław Bonifacy Jundziłł (1761–1847). A large collection of minerals and shells was donated by Count Michał Walicki. In 1823, the entire zoological collection was handed over to the professor of veterinary medicine and comparative anatomy Ludwig Heinrich Bojanus (1776–1827) – to the Cabinet of Zoology and Zootomy, which was based in the Cathedral of Theotokos (Lith. Vilniaus Dievo Motinos Ėmimo į Dangų katedra). Bojanus was a German physician and naturalist who spent most of his active career (1804–1824) teaching at Vilnius University. Under his curatorship the collections continued to grow (about 20,000 specimens) and were widely used in lectures and demonstrations. When in 1827 Carol Eduard von Eichwald (1795–1876) took over the leadership of the

Vilnius University's Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy from Bojanus, the zoological collections were known throughout Europe. Eichwald continued to add to the collections and hired new museum staff to take care of them. Unfortunately, these important museum and study collections had a sad fate. The Vilnius Medical-Surgical Academy which housed them was closed by order of the tsar in 1842, and most of these collections were transferred to the newly-opened Imperial Kiev University in Ukraine.