

## **Didactic paleontological collections in elementary and high schools - disclosing geosciences.**

SCHWANKE, C. Departamento de Ciências da Natureza/CAP; Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro; Rio de Janeiro; Brazil.

Despite the fact that Paleontology is formally a field of Geosciences, it is approached in the elementary and high schools during the classes of Science and Biology. The use of didactic collections in those classes is very important since they stimulate the interest of the student by direct observation and handling of samples. Regarding Paleontology, however, there is a general lack of specimens since fossils are very rare objects that are housed in museums or other scientific organizations of limited direct access to students.

In order to minimize this problem, a program for Science and Biology teachers was organized. This program consists of providing general explanations about fossils, particularly from Brazil, and the elaboration and organization of a fossil collection. Each teacher learns how to mold and cast a fossil (donated to the program by museums) and receives a complete collection to be used in his/her classes.

This program is part of a larger project that is being developed by CAP/UERJ, emphasizing the importance of the interdisciplinary aspect of the teaching of Sciences. The multiplication of such programs that prepare teachers of the Brazilian public school system constitutes a powerful way to popularize Paleontology and subjects related to Geosciences among young students.