

For Immediate Release: September 9, 2009

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY TO LAUNCH NEW WEBSITE SEPTEMBER 9

Redesigned www.nhm.org Makes Specimens and Scientists Accessible, Serves as Valuable Teacher Resource, and Provides Behind the Scenes Glimpse at Previously Unseen Labs and Collection Areas

Los Angeles, CA—Reinforcing its commitment to provoke curiosity and deepen understanding of our natural and cultural worlds, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County launches a completely redesigned website on Wednesday, September 9. The site, www.nhm.org, provides visually arresting images, robust multi-media content, and greater ease of use for visitors of all ages. The site shows off extraordinary specimens — a rare red diamond, a megamouth shark, and hundreds more — and highlights Museum research, from fossil-hunting expeditions to petroleum-eating bacteria at the La Brea Tar Pits.

“The new website is really a metaphor for the transformation underway at the Natural History Museum — dynamic, rich in content and easy to access for visitors of all ages interested in exploring the mysteries of life on Earth,” said Cynthia Wornham, Vice President for Marketing and Communications for the Museum. “From a user standpoint, it’s designed to make it easy for visitors to plan their visit, for teachers to schedule a school trip, for everyone to buy eco-friendly merchandise online and to support the Museum by becoming a volunteer, member or donor. But the website accomplishes something broader too — revealing our collections and research to a local and global audience in exciting ways, and therein, inspiring stewardship for our living planet.”



Visitors to www.nhm.org will first notice new, beautiful photography that spotlights the Museum’s vast collections and exhibits, as well as a user-friendly navigation system that makes information available to all the Museum’s audiences.

- An eight-year-old *T. rex* fanatic can watch a video of the popular *Dinosaur Encounters* program, in which life-size puppets roam our halls.
- Science and history buffs can read about the expeditions, research and discoveries of Museum curators.
- Out-of-town tourists can embark on a pictorial gallery tour, check out “Curators Favorites,” print out a guide for seeing the Museum in an hour, and use our interactive map to plan a visit.

- Architecture buffs can read up on the Museum’s original home — the Beaux-Arts 1913 Building — that has been lovingly restored and reopens with new exhibits in summer 2010.
- Angelenos will have ways to explore the nature they encounter in their own back yards — from the birds they see in trees to the spiders and butterflies they find in the garden.

Our school visits program alone brings more than 300,000 young Angelenos into the Museum each year, and it’s a priority to help these students’ teachers and chaperones provide the best learning experience possible. The new website also serves as an excellent teacher resource as the school year is getting underway. There are now free, downloadable lesson plans and activities, all aligned with the State of California Board of Education’s standards for social science, science and history curriculums. There are lesson plans available for singular field trips, as well as more in-depth guides for pre-, during and post-visit activities.

The website launches with approximately 600 pages, each filled with refreshed content. The photos showcase the collections; these pages work to tell the stories *behind* the collections — asking questions such as why each artifact or specimen is extraordinary, what Museum researchers are doing with them, and how do the objects figure into the planet’s “big picture”?

This approach is at the heart of the Museum’s new exhibition philosophy, which will be illuminated first in the new *Age of Mammals* hall, opening Summer 2010 — stunning visuals coupled with an added emphasis on context and scientific process. The website, as well as the new galleries, have layers of learning; visitors can take in just the visuals and the basic details, or delve deeper into topics like evolution and climate change.

The new website also goes “behind the scenes” in the Museum’s curatorial departments, exploring the research that is unfolding every day in the Museum’s many labs and collection areas, and presenting the curatorial staff in a livelier, more accessible way. It explores the staff’s expeditions, field work, and discoveries of new species, and then introduces this work to Museum visitors via exhibits and innovative curator-designed events. Visitors can now find in-depth information about Rancho La Brea and the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits recounting what life was like thousand of years ago and highlighting the latest discoveries of mammoths and sabertoothed cats at the mid-Wilshire site.

While universities and institutions focus on specific areas of science, the Museum’s particular expertise is biodiversity — all life, natural and cultural, on the planet — and the interpretation of this biodiversity for our visitors. With this more holistic, contextual take on our collections and research also comes a greater emphasis on environmental stewardship, which the new site supports with details about our sustainability programming, eco-friendly merchandise, local field trips, and backyard and citizen science efforts.

The website redesign was led by Los Angeles-based interactive agency Primitive Spark, and graphic design partner KBDA (Kim Baer Design Associates). Content development and technical support were provided by NHM’s in-house web team. “Our challenge with the **www.nhm.org** site was to appeal to an unusually wide range of ages and knowledge levels, literally everyone from a child with an interest in butterflies to a retired biology teacher who’s thinking of becoming a docent,” said Kathryn Campbell, Managing Partner at Primitive Spark. “The final design showcases both the beauty of nature and the laborious research that the Museum does to understand it. Dozens of the Museum’s researchers now have direct access to updating their work on the site from anywhere in the world, real-time.”

Museum Info

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is located at 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007. Open from 9:30 am to 5 pm seven days a week, except New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Tickets are \$9 for adults, \$6.50 for children. For more information, visit the Museum’s website at **www.nhm.org** or call (213) 763-DINO.

About the NHM

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County serves more than one million families and visitors annually, and is a national leader in research, exhibitions and education. The Museum was the first dedicated museum building in Los Angeles, opening its doors in 1913. It has amassed one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history — with more than 35 million objects, some as old as 4.5 billion years. The Natural History Family of Museums includes the NHM, the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits (Hancock Park/Mid-Wilshire), and the William S. Hart Park and Museum (Newhall, California).

NHM Next

The completed renovation of the Beaux-Arts 1913 Building sets the stage for the Museum's rollout of new visitor experiences leading up to the Museum's centennial in 2013. The milestone re-opening of the 1913 Building will begin in Summer 2010 with new exhibitions inside its iconic Rotunda and the *Age of Mammals* galleries. In Summer 2011, the Museum will open *Dinosaur Mysteries*, the highly-anticipated return of a dedicated dinosaur hall. *Under the Sun*, an exhibition focusing on the Southern California environmental history will open in Spring 2012.