

FOSSIL MYSTERIES

Overview

Opens July 1, 2006

- Will have four million visitors over the planned 20-year exhibition lifespan; with a website visitorship potential of 325,000 unique visitors annually.

Regional Focus

- Focuses on the flora and fauna of the region of southern California and Baja California, Mexico, and showcases abundant regional fossils from the last 75 million years, found by Museum paleontologists; gives visitors from the region a connection with their ancient heritage.
- Responds to the public's overwhelming request and need for hands-on, minds-on, educational experiences and more in-depth knowledge of basic natural history of the region.

Unique Elements

- Is a unique exhibition both in content and design; the product of the creativity of the Museum's exhibition department and the scientific expertise of the Museum's paleontology department; the first permanent exhibition created by the San Diego Natural History Museum in the last 25 years.
- Contains elements, animals, and artifacts that won't be seen anywhere else in the world, including the most complete dinosaur fossil ever discovered in California; presentations of extinct animals from the region that have never been interpreted before in drawings and sculpture; a life-size model of the extinct megalodon shark, the world's largest known predator.
- Emphasizes exploration and discovery with many hands-on interactives and touchable exhibits, including real fossils, rocks and bronze casts, and huggable sculptures of baby animals.
- Features extensive use of original art to interpret the natural history of the region, including giant murals by paleoartist and cartoonist William Stout, recognized internationally for his trendsetting work with book illustrations of dinosaurs and movie-set design.

Science

- Is designed along a timeline. While visitors explore the fundamental themes of ecology, evolution, extinction, and earth processes, they will discover how change over time is reflected in the region. In each section, these themes and major regional events in time also refer to the present and future, demonstrating the relevance of natural history to our lives today.

Add two SDNHM/Fossil Mysteries/Overview

- Presents up-to-date scientific theory as a result of extensive research conducted by the exhibition's content specialist; is not a rehashing of old ideas.
- Has a "mystery" theme throughout, where some of the stories are told, some are presented to the visitor to solve and some remain unsolved.

Design and Fabrication

- Uses a combination of traditional and contemporary design elements that give the exhibition a dynamic and exciting flow: a dramatic use of bold colors, rounded walls, lowered and raised ceilings, a variety of floor treatments, and mixed lighting sources.
- Incorporates rarely used exhibition design techniques such as dramatic life-size animals in a "half-and-half" format: fleshed out on one side and skeletal on the other.
- Covers 9700 sq. ft. and is spread through parts of the original building (1933) and the new wing (2001).
- With scientific and artistic guidance by San Diego Natural History Museum staff, was fabricated by the Exhibition Department of the Science Museum of Minnesota, and their subcontractors, Blue Rhino and Atomic Props (Minnesota), RCI (Canada), Bill Monteleone and Garner Holt (California) and Richard Webber (New York).
- Was in the making for three years.

Accessibility

- All interpretive material is presented in both Spanish and English.
- Displays and signage are the right height for children as well as adults.
- The floor plan is open, dynamic and flowing.
- The messages are conveyed in a variety of media to appeal to all types of learning styles.

Funding

- Major support for this \$8 million exhibition has been received from the National Science Foundation, California Cultural and Historic Endowment, Stephen and Mary Birch Foundation, Legler Benbough Foundation, Gerald and Inez Grant Parker Foundation, and Thomas Ackerman Foundation.

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