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MOST COMPREHENSIVE EXHIBITION ABOUT THE LIFE AND WORK OF CHARLES DARWIN TO OPEN AT THE SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Exhibition's only West Coast appearance November 9, 2009–February 10, 2010

*September 21, 2009; San Diego—****Darwin: Evolution!Revolution***, the most in-depth exhibition ever mounted on Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution by natural selection, opens at the San Diego Natural History Museum on November 7, 2009. The exhibition's appearance in San Diego coincides with the celebration of the bicentenary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. The exhibition, featuring the broadest collection ever assembled of specimens, artifacts, original manuscripts, and memorabilia related to Darwin, remains on view until February 28, 2010. Tickets for nonmembers range from \$12–16 with discounts for children, students, military, seniors, and groups.

Darwin: Evolution!Revolution offers an engaging and enlightening exploration of the extraordinary life and mind of Charles Darwin (1809–1882), whose curiosity, observations, and discoveries forever changed the perception of the origin and nature of our own species, as well as the myriad other species on this planet, and launched modern biological science. Visitors will experience the wonders Darwin witnessed on his journey as an adventurous young naturalist aboard the *HMS Beagle* on its five-year voyage (1831–1836) to South America, the Galápagos Islands, and beyond.

“On the 200th anniversary of his birth, what better place to celebrate Darwin's life and legacy than a natural history museum?” says Bradford Hollingsworth, Curator of Herpetology, and co-curator of the exhibition (along with Mark Wheeler, Ph.D., Philosophy Department Chair at SDSU) “***Darwin: Evolution!Revolution*** reveals insights into the development of evolution as a central principle in biology. Notably, it reveals Darwin held both enthusiasm for discovery and insecurities of doubt as he sought to understand biodiversity. At the Museum, we continue his work in the Biodiversity Research Center of the Californias, where scientists uncover the form and function of our region's flora and fauna in both the past and present. Darwin would be at home here, working in the deep corners of the research collections, marveling over the intricacies of life's creatures.”

The first clues that led Darwin to his theory of evolution came into focus during his voyage on the *Beagle*. The exhibition re-creates this experience with models of an iguana and horned frogs from South America, along with **actual fossil specimens collected by Darwin**. ***Darwin: Evolution!Revolution*** also features a reconstruction of the naturalist's study at Down House, where he proposed the revolutionary theory that life evolves according to natural selection.

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Darwin's original magnifying glass serves as an iconic object that exemplifies the simple tools that Darwin used "to let Nature come to him." Notebooks and letters illustrate his growing reputation in London and the social climate within which Darwin struggled to develop his theory. Visitors are encouraged to touch some of the specimens—such as the **reproduction of a giant glyptodont skeleton** (a prehistoric armored mammal).

Darwin's evolutionary theory is central to science and is the foundation for all of modern biology. Yet, outside the scientific community, it has been the subject of controversy from the time of the publication of *The Origin of Species* to today. The exhibition addresses various controversies that have arisen surrounding the theory, and clarifies the distinction between scientific theories and nonscientific and theological explanations about life's origin and diversity.

"The *Origin of Species* was published 150 years ago and just 15 years later, the San Diego Society of Natural History was founded. Darwin concluded his treatise with these words: 'From so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.' And, from so simple a beginning, the San Diego Natural History Museum has collected and studied 'endless forms most wonderful' that evolved to make up the magnificent biodiversity of our region. This is the perfect exhibition to feature on the museum's 135th anniversary as it has evolved into one of the leading research museums of our region."

In conjunction with *Darwin: Evolution\Revolution*, the Museum has developed an exciting lineup of public programs that reflect the many dimensions of Charles Darwin as an explorer and naturalist. A lecture series featuring experts in the field of evolutionary science, a course series featuring Museum researchers and science curators, an overnight camp-in for Boy Scouts and one for Girl Scouts, and a program for adults called *Books and Beetlemania: Charles Darwin* are some of the programs at the Museum starting in November 2009.

For the true Darwin experience, the Museum has partnered with Linblad Expeditions to offer an extraordinary opportunity for Museum members to explore the unspoiled natural beauty and unique wildlife that sparked Darwin's pioneering research aboard Linblad Expeditions' 96-guest *National Geographic Endeavour* along with the trip's leader, Curator of Birds and Mammals Phil Unitt. The Galapagos Islands, located 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador, provide a natural habitat for some of the world's most unusual animals.

The *Darwin* Education Title Sponsor is The Joan and Irwin Jacobs Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation. This exhibition season is sponsored by Jerome's Furniture and Eleanor and Jerry Navarra and Family. *Darwin* is organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York (www.amnh.org) in collaboration with the Museum of Science, Boston; The Field Museum, Chicago; the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; and the Natural History Museum, London.

Celebrating its 135th year, the San Diego Natural History Museum is the second oldest scientific institution in California; third west of the Mississippi. Its mission is to interpret the natural world through research, education, and exhibits; to promote understanding of the evolution and diversity of southern California and the peninsula of Baja California and to inspire in all a respect for nature and the environment. Located in Balboa Park at the intersection of Village Place and Park Blvd., the Museum is open daily except for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Phone: 619.232.3821. Website: www.sdnhm.org.

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