



The Natural  
History Museum  
of Los Angeles  
County

Reimagined.  
Beginning  
Summer 2010.

# NEWS

## MEDIA CONTACTS:

Kristin Friedrich, NHM

Email: [kfriedri@nhm.org](mailto:kfriedri@nhm.org)

Phone: (213) 763-3532; Cell: (323) 449-7370

Rachel Bauch, Ruder Finn

Email: [bauchr@ruderfinn.com](mailto:bauchr@ruderfinn.com)

Phone: (310) 882-4013; Cell: (323) 841-4139

## NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY BRINGS CLIMATE CHANGE & EVOLUTION DRAMATICALLY TO LIFE IN NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION

### *AGE OF MAMMALS*

OPENING JULY 11, 2010



### A Key Experience of the NHM Is Reimagined For Today's Audiences, Inside Newly Transformed 1913 Building; Kicks Off Institution-Wide Metamorphosis

LOS ANGELES, CA, March 1, 2010 – A museum experience 65-million years in the making, the spectacular new *Age of Mammals* exhibition at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County in Exposition Park will open on Sunday, July 11, 2010 inside the Museum's newly restored historic 1913 Building. *Age of Mammals* displays some of the Museum's—and the world's—most spectacular fossil mammals, bringing to the public an unprecedented exploration of how a special class of animals—including human beings—evolved through tremendous changes in the Earth's environment, dramatically altering the Earth in their turn.

With dozens of rare and authentic specimens from the Museum's great collections, a host of interactive exhibits, and an involving, evocative design, the new *Age of Mammals* will be the vanguard of NHM's five-year-long restoration and renovation of its magnificent 1913 Building, the first dedicated museum facility in Los Angeles. In tandem with the iconic Haaga Family Rotunda Galleries, which open on the same day, *Age of Mammals* will be the first in the series of new exhibitions and re-imagined spaces that are thoroughly transforming the Museum for the 21st century. By 2013, nearly half of the Museum's public space will have been renovated, and five completely new permanent exhibits will have been created, including a new dinosaur hall in 2011 and an exhibition about Southern California's natural and cultural history opening in 2012.

"This July marks the public unveiling of the transformation of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County," said Dr. Jane Pisano, president and director of the Museum. "*Age of Mammals* will feature extraordinary specimens, including fresh discoveries unearthed at the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, and a wealth of exciting display media. This is a compelling new scientific story, told inside of a stunningly restored architectural space—the historic 1913 Building. The exhibition will unforgettably emphasize the Museum's mission: to inspire wonder, discovery, and responsibility for our natural and cultural worlds."

According to the curator in charge of *Age of Mammals*, Dr. John Harris, NHM Head of Vertebrate Studies and Chief Curator of the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, "This exhibition is partly our own story, and the story of our nearest relatives in the animal kingdom. But it is also the story of our planet as a whole, during an era that has seen the relocation of continents, the reorientation of wind patterns and ocean currents, and long term climate change. *Age of Mammals* is the first permanent museum exhibit to trace 65 million years of evolution—from the extinction of the dinosaurs to the rise of humans—within the context of epochal changes in the Earth's geology and climate. We believe this new way of telling our story is not only exciting and illuminating but also provides a powerful message for people today, putting climate change and human impact on our environment into the context of long term geological and evolutionary processes."



### **What's On View in *Age of Mammals***

Encompassing one entire wing of the original 1913 Building, *Age of Mammals* is designed to fill the two floor space with wonderful specimens, making use of both the main floor and the extraordinary floating mezzanine. The story begins 65 million years ago, at the time of the rapid extinction of the Dinosaurs, which opened up the world to a class of animals—mammals—that had previously been but a minor part of the world's biodiversity. *Age of Mammals'* central media piece shows visitors how our planet's great land masses split apart or crashed together, vastly altering the globe's temperatures and weather patterns and created new environments with changing resources that effected the evolution of familiar—and unfamiliar—classes of mammals. Then, having set this immensely large stage, *Age of Mammals* will tell the story of the small, furry, nocturnal, insect-eating animals that began to spread over the landscape—and into the seas, and through the skies—adapting to the opportunities of each fresh habitat, evolving into an astonishing array of species and responding to new environmental changes wherever they went.

Some of the Museum's most fascinating animal specimens—including the La Brea horse, Simi Valley mastodon, sabertoothed cat, and the mysterious ancient, horned brontothere (“thunder beast”)—will be displayed in the ground-floor installation. There, visitors will learn how grazing animals such as horses evolved as the Earth cooled and grasslands started to replace forests; how carnivorous predators such as bone-cracking dogs evolved with the grazers; and how characteristics ranging from methods of locomotion to differences in diet have reflected changes in the environment. In other chapters of the ground-floor installation, visitors will see how whales evolved from hippo-like ancestors and how mammals from Asia, Africa and South America contributed to our continent's diversity.

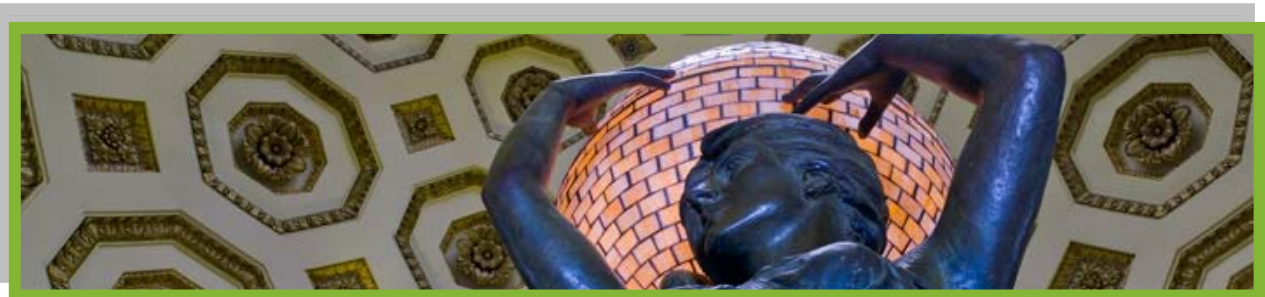
Perhaps most compelling of all, the ground floor of the exhibit will show how some types of African apes began walking on two feet, as the equatorial forests gave way to open grasslands some seven million years ago. Tool use took hold, diets changed, brain size expanded, and waves of human ancestors began to migrate across the globe, no longer just adapting to changes in climate and environment but producing them—down to the present day. The story concludes with the stories of existing mammals, and of how humans today are affecting their own future and that of all other mammals.

But how do scientists know all this? On the mezzanine level, *Age of Mammals* will take the story further by revealing the tools and methods that scientists use to reconstruct the past. Here visitors will view displays including the fossil of a newly discovered, extinct species of sea cow that lived along the California coastline some 10 to 12 million years ago, and will learn how a specimen like this is discovered, studied, identified and reconstructed. An evocative display will re-imagine what sites around Los Angeles have looked like throughout the past 40 million years, and will explain how our knowledge

of mammals helps scientists to reconstruct the geologic past. Visitors will get glimpses of the work conducted at the Natural History Museum's different excavation sites; while overhead, apparently "swimming" above the mezzanine, will be some of the Museum's spectacular specimens of aquatic mammals, including a sea lion and a sperm whale.

### **Age of Mammals Behind-the-Scenes**

*Age of Mammals* has been designed for the Natural History Museum by Reich+Petch Design International. Graphic design services were provided by Kim Baer of KBDA and designer Leon Rodriguez, both of Los Angeles. Exhibit fabrication was done by production house Cinnabar California, Inc., of Los Angeles. Second Story, of Portland, provided major media exhibit and visitor experiences. Artist Randy Cooper, working together with NHM paleontologist Larry Barnes, created mesh, see-through sculptures of Museum specimens: a sea cow (*Dusisiren jordani*), a baby sperm whale (*Aulophyseter morricei*) and a pinniped (*Allodesmus kelloggi*). These extraordinary sculptures "flesh out" the specimens without obscuring the original fossil inside, providing a feeling for what it would have been like in life while allowing visitors to see the real fossil specimen. When they are installed inside the *Age of Mammals* exhibition, they will appear as if they are "swimming" in the air.



### **The Haaga Family Rotunda**

A modern-day cabinet of curiosities awaits visitors inside the new Haaga Family Rotunda with its *What on Earth?* exhibit—the initial installation designed for this magnificent architectural space with its brilliantly restored dome and Walter Horace Judson stained-glass skylight. *What on Earth?* presents enigmatic and visually arresting specimens and objects from the Museum's diverse collections of natural and cultural history in eight magnificent cases nestled between scagliola columns. Platypus eggs, a fossilized log with attached marine invertebrates, an ancient Peruvian gold feather and an animation studio sound effects device will engage visitors in a series of enigmatic and playful questions on the side of the case facing the inner portion of the Rotunda while answers or current scientific theories will be presented on the back side.

Originally designed to display paintings, the mezzanine-level exhibits will honor architectural design intent for art display by exhibiting works on the flat Vermont Marble walls. Its inaugural exhibition will feature Charles Knight’s series “Life on Earth through Time,” displaying this iconic artist’s early attempts at interpreting past eras along with NHM curators’ up to date explanations of new discoveries and interpretations of the ancient scenes depicted in the Knight paintings. The exhibition provides a historical reference, and sentimental link, and evidence of how ongoing scientific discoveries are continually providing better and more detailed information about periods of geologic time presented inside *Age of Mammals* and the future *Dinosaur Mysteries* experiences.



### **Renovating the 1913 Building**

The 1913 Building opened on November 6, 1913, as the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art. Each of its three wings, radiating from the Rotunda, was dedicated to a separate discipline. Using extensive data from the NHM’s own archives—including historic drawings, photos and documents—the project team uncovered the original design, layout and construction methods of the original building and its subsequent 1920s additions in order to restore the building, while modernizing it inside and out.

The Cordell Corporation, led by Project Manager Don Webb, and CO Architects, led by Jorge de la Cal, began Museum renovations with Matt Construction in December 2006. Cordell has a strong background in working with preservation interests, and guided by a commissioned historic structure report by Brenda Levin & Associates, the team’s first step was the seismic strengthening of the landmark 1913 Building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Vertical shafts, each six inches in diameter, were cored into the exterior masonry walls from the roof and through the foundation. The shafts were then fitted with steel reinforcing rods and filled with a high-strength polymer resin which bonds to both masonry and steel. This novel application of bonded carbon-fiber technology, originally developed by the aerospace industry, has permitted the seismic strengthening of the building without any visible effect on the historic facade, and is perhaps the largest such application of this technology in the U.S.

In addition to fortifying the walls, the seismic retrofit involved thinning out the building’s heavy concrete rooftops and replacing the mass with the stronger and lighter bonded carbon-fiber-materials. The exterior



dome was additionally reinforced with steel, and polymer epoxy was injected into hairline cracks that had been exacerbated by earthquakes to prevent water damage.

The early phase of construction also focused on the restoration of the brilliantly colored stained glass skylight at the apex of the Rotunda. This exacting work was carried out by David Judson, grandson of the skylight's designer, the eminent Walter Horace Judson. Under his direction, the ornate and elegant stained glass was cleaned, repaired and strengthened, bringing it back to its full glory 53 feet above the Rotunda's floor.

The renovation team then moved on to uncover and restore the building's exquisite, original architectural details, many of which had been obscured over the years. This phase of construction included the careful restoration and cleaning of the east entrance portico; cleaning and repair of the iconic ribbed and ceramic-tiled exterior dome with its copper parapet; uncovering of marble walls and mosaics; the reconstruction of the building's gargoyles and a newly created six-foot eagle on the east entrance.



### NHM Next

The evolution at the Natural History Museum means exciting new experiences and resources will open each and every year to the public over the next three years:

- **July 2010:** The milestone reopening of the Museum's **1913 Building** begins this summer with the *Age of Mammals* experience and exhibitions inside the iconic Haaga Family Rotunda.
- **July 2011:** The highly anticipated exhibition *Dinosaur Mysteries* and the opening of three acres of new outdoor gardens reclaimed from hardscape.
- **December 2012:** *Under the Sun*, an exhibition exploring the natural and cultural history of Los Angeles and Southern California, opens to the public, along with a new hands-on indoor space that replaces the museum's landmark Discovery Center.
- **2013:** More transformed gallery spaces are unveiled leading to the celebration of **NHM's Centennial in 2013**.

## **About the Museum**

*The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is located at 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles. It is open daily 9:30 am to 5 pm. 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).*

## **Image Information**

Page 1, from the left: Exhibition rendering of *Age of Mammals*, Mezzanine view looking downwards towards “floating” sperm whale skeleton; rendering courtesy of Cinnabar California, Inc. *Age of Mammals* will exhibit a wide variety of ancient and modern mammals such as this polar bear, an animal endangered by climate change; Photo © Karen Knauer. Brontothere or “thunder beast” specimen. Photo courtesy of NHM of Los Angeles County.

Page 2: Dr. John Harris, NHM Curator for *Age of Mammals* exhibition, NHM Head of Vertebrate Studies and Chief Curator of the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, interviewed on camera for Project 23 discoveries. Photo courtesy of NHM of Los Angeles County.

Page 4: A partial view of *The Three Muses*, sculpted by Julia Bracken Wendt in 1914, under the domed ceiling of the 1913 Building historic Rotunda. Photo courtesy of NHM of Los Angeles County.

Page 5: Detail of the terra cotta arched East Portico of the 1913 Building.

Page 6: Exposition Park view of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County with the iconic 1913 Building in the background. Photo courtesy of NHM of Los Angeles County.

Page 7 (below): Restored, oculus of stained glass skylight by Walter Horace Judson. Photo courtesy of NHM of Los Angeles County.

