

1 Snake stones



Palaeontologists study fossils to find evidence of ancient life. In the past, people had different explanations for fossils. Ammonites were often called 'snake stones' because people believed they were snakes that had been magically turned to stone. Look closely, can you see the snake heads carved into these ammonites?

2 A mighty discovery

Mary Anning was a great fossil hunter. In 1811, when she was just 12 years old, she and her brother discovered a strange stone head sticking out of a cliff! It was a fossil of an ancient reptile called an ichthyosaur ('fish lizard'). What might Mary have thought when she found it?



3 Giant footprints



Trace fossils are not made from an animal or plant, but from things they left behind, like teeth marks, leaf prints or even fossilised poo! Put your hands over these giant footprints. We believe they were made by an *iguanodon*, a plant-eating dinosaur that lived in the early Cretaceous.

4 A missing link



This is a cast of a famous fossil, the 'Berlin Archaeopteryx'. It has sharp teeth, feathers and a beak! At first, Archaeopteryx confused palaeontologists with its mix of dinosaur and bird features. After careful study, they realised that it is a 'transitional fossil', and shows that dinosaurs slowly evolved into birds.

5 The right tool for the job



Charles Darwin noticed that birds on the Galapagos Islands had different beaks. He realised that they came from the same bird species (ancestor) whose offspring had flown to separate islands. As each island had different food, their beaks had slowly evolved to help them eat. What would these birds eat?

6 Variation and inheritance

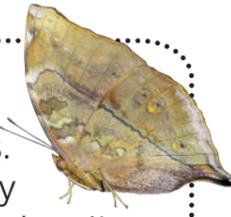


There are always differences (variation) within a species. People have different traits, such as eye colour, yet we are all human. If a trait is important for survival, creatures with it live longer, reproduce, and pass it on to their young (inheritance). How are these snail shells different?

7 Master of disguise



Evolution can create weird and wonderful adaptations. The wings of a leaf butterfly seem bright and colourful when it flies, but close to create the perfect camouflage... Their underside looks just like a leaf! Can you think of another adaptation that could help an animal to survive?



8 Ancient ancestor



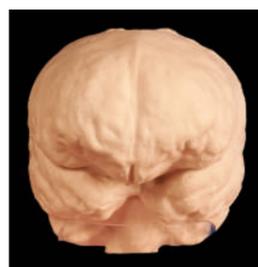
This jaw is from a tiger shark, the fourth largest shark alive today. Now compare it to the extinct *megalodon*, thought to be the largest predatory fish that ever lived. These fossil teeth give a glimpse of a terrifying predator. What else can fossils tell us about ancestors?

9 Dead as a dodo



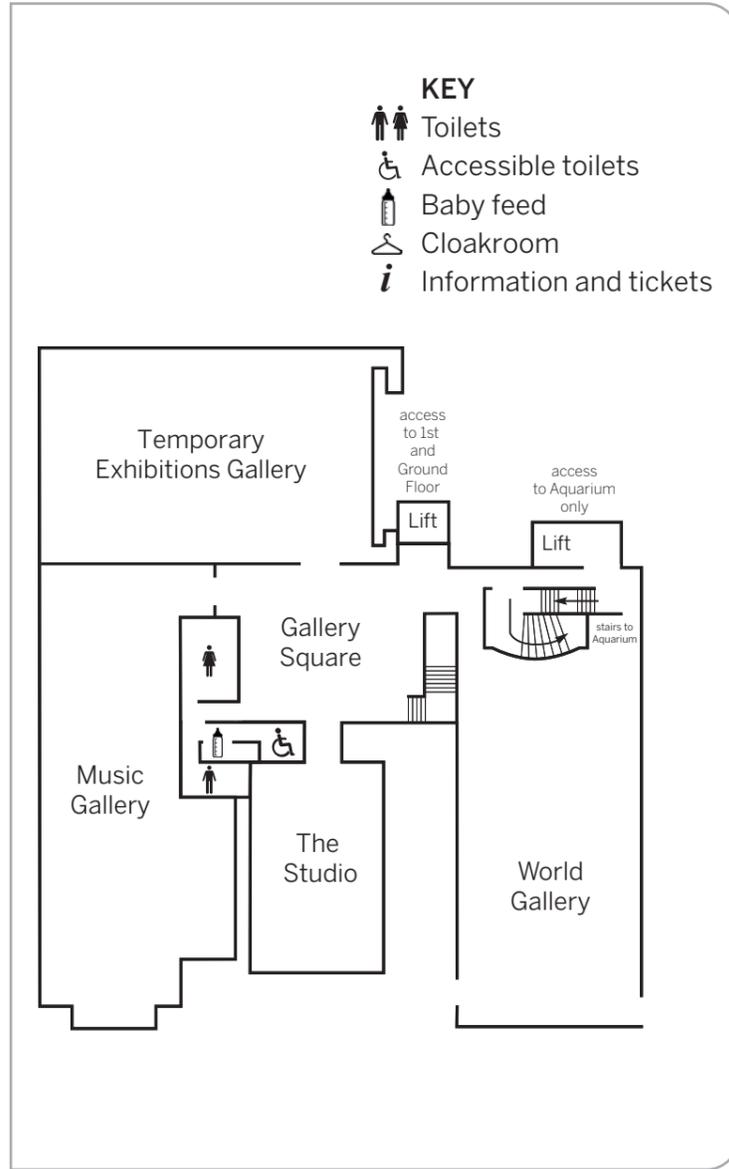
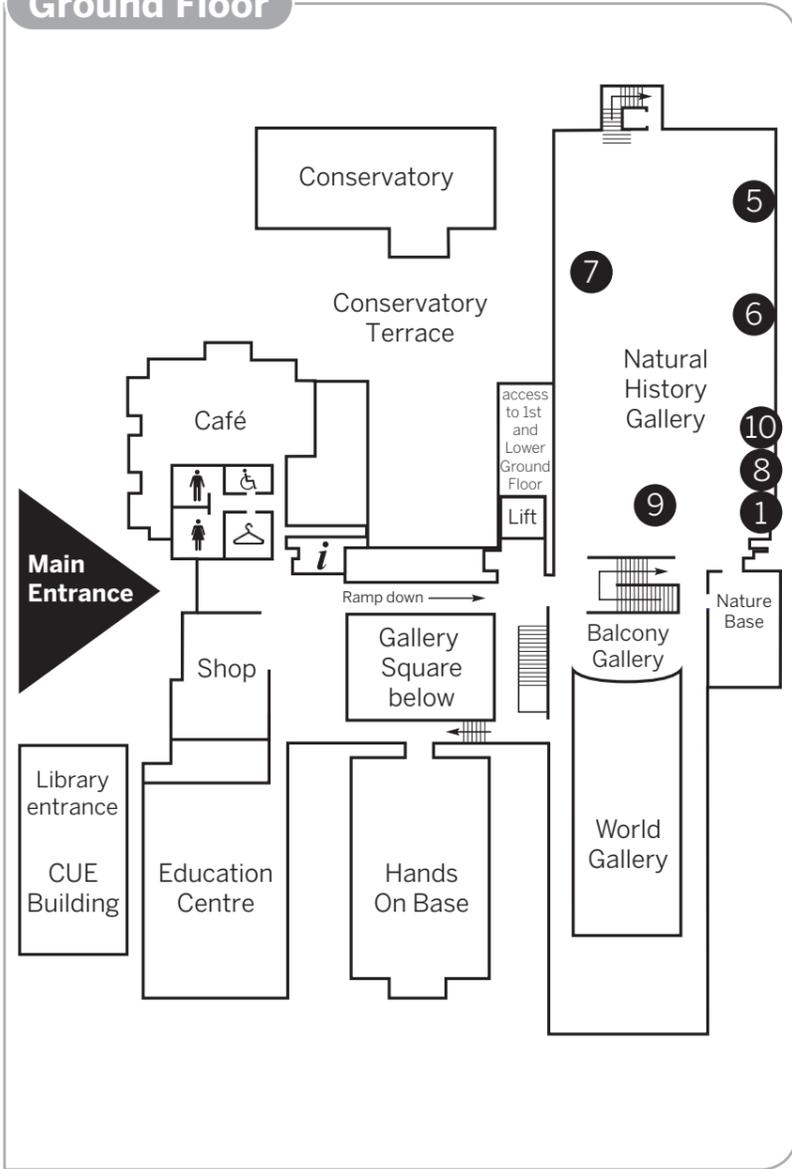
Without predators, dodos on the island of Mauritius didn't need to fly! Over time, they evolved larger bodies and smaller wings. When sailors settled on Mauritius in the 1500s, they began hunting dodos. Their ships carried rats and dogs that ate the dodos' eggs. The dodo was extinct by 1700.

10 What next?

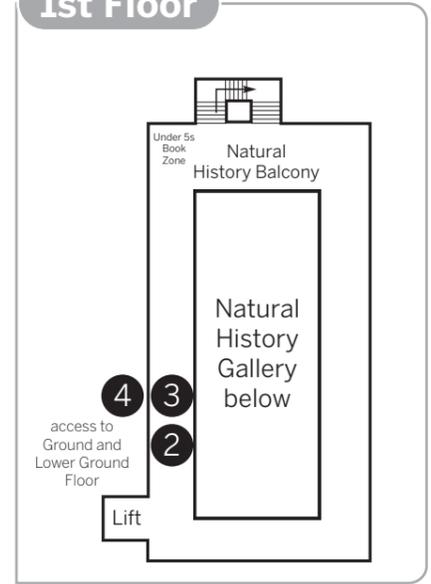


Fossils show that humans evolved about 300,000 years ago. Our large brains have helped us progress by developing language, clearing forests, building cities and inventing computers. What do these human developments do to nature? Will there be as many species in 100 years? What will future fossils look like?

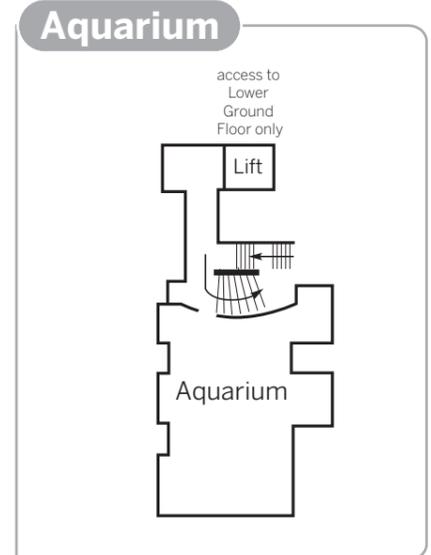
Ground Floor



1st Floor



Aquarium



FOSSILS & EVOLUTION OBJECTS

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- 6 Variation and inheritance
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