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Sept. 10, 2009

Media Web site: <http://newsdesk.si.edu>

Darwin Exhibition Opens at Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History

The National Museum of Natural History will open a new exhibition, "Since Darwin: The Evolution of Evolution," Sept. 12 in celebration of the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his groundbreaking "On the Origin of Species." The exhibition will be on view through July 18, 2010. A team of museum scientists from the departments of Botany, Entomology, Mineral Sciences, Paleobiology and Vertebrate Zoology collaborated on the exhibition.

"Since Darwin: The Evolution of Evolution" highlights the significant role that Darwin's theories have played in explaining and unifying all the biological sciences. Specimens from the museum's diverse collections, along with documentation of ongoing research at the museum, illustrate the importance of evolution as a scientific foundation, and how knowledge of evolution has evolved over the past 150 years.

The exhibition includes about 90 objects with seven books and 80 specimens from the museum's collections, including fossils, insects, plants, dog skulls, goat horns, mice and birds. The most intriguing specimen may also be considered one of the least attractive—a bird named the Hudsonian Godwit that Darwin collected in 1837. The presentation of new discoveries made by Museum of Natural History scientists shows the vast influence of the evolutionary theory and how the research and inquiry processes that Darwin promoted continue today. One recent discovery on view is a new species of heliconia plant that was named in honor of Cristián Samper, museum director and botanist.

The exhibition will be complemented by a public symposium on Darwin, a children's public program and an exhibit presented by Smithsonian Institution Libraries.

The Darwin Anniversary Symposium will be hosted by Hans-Dieter Sues, associate director for Research and Collections, and Douglas Erwin, senior scientist in the Department of Paleobiology. This all-day event features talks on a variety of subjects from evolutionary biology by internationally renowned experts from the museum and other institutions. The symposium will take place Saturday, Sept. 12, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. in the museum’s Baird Auditorium. It is free and open to the public.

“Create Your Own Nature Bio-Journal” is a kid-friendly workshop that will be held at the museum on Saturday, Sept. 12, 1 – 4 p.m., in the Sant Ocean Hall. Guided by artist and author Edwin Fontánez, children create bio-journals to record observations of nature and decorate them with rubber stamps of their favorite animals, flowers and birds and their own drawings. Co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Latino Center, the workshop also celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month. The event is free and open to the public.

The Smithsonian Institution Libraries opens its new exhibition, “Darwin’s Legacy,” at the museum Sept. 10. The exhibition features the first edition of Darwin’s book, “On the Origin of Species,” published in 1859. The exhibition also showcases Darwin’s silk neckerchief, Joseph Henry’s desk diary, beautifully illustrated volumes from “The Zoology of the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle” (edited by Darwin and published from 1838 – 1843), a background map of the track of the H.M.S. Beagle and Galapagos land iguana and mockingbird specimens from the museum’s collections.

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