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## **Smithsonian's Natural History Museum Continues Celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

One hundred years ago, a new museum called the National Museum of Natural History dedicated to 'understanding the natural world and our place in it,' first opened its doors to the public on the National Mall. It was the third museum in the growing Smithsonian Institution.

On March 17, 1910, the curators and scientists of the green-slate domed museum set out on a quest to collect, nurture, share and protect the most important collection of natural science specimens in the world. Known initially as the United States National Museum, the museum took its present name in 1968. Today it is not only the most visited museum in the Smithsonian complex, but the most visited natural history museum in the world, recording more than 7.4 million visitors in 2009.

"Since the National Museum of Natural History opened its doors in 1910, it has served as the foundation of Smithsonian science and research," said Cristián Samper, director of the museum. "This milestone creates a singular opportunity to recognize the role that the Natural History Museum has played in the history of Washington, DC, the nation and the world. And while we continue to evolve, everyone affiliated with and working here at the museum is immensely proud of the past one hundred years and equally excited about our vision for the future."

From the opening in 1910, the museum has grown to become the steward of the world's largest natural history collections, comprised of more than 126 million objects and specimens, with seven departments: anthropology, botany, entomology, mineral sciences, invertebrate zoology, paleobiology, and vertebrate zoology. The museum's wide-ranging interdisciplinary research programs bring together scientists from the museum and research institutions from across the United States and around

the world to address topics of current importance – from biological diversity and global climate change to ecosystem modeling and documentation and preservation of human cultural heritages.

An integral part of the museum’s Centennial Celebration is the March 17, 2010 opening of the [David H. Koch Hall of Human Origins](#). The hall’s permanent exhibition titled “[What Does It Mean to Be Human?](#)” is the centerpiece of a broader Human Origins Initiative that includes ongoing research and educational and outreach programs designed to offer the public unprecedented access to the discoveries and scientific evidence about how humans have evolved over millions of years in response to a changing world.

Throughout the centennial year, the history and future of the museum will be explored through an interactive website (insert URL), social media experiences, festivals, and a lecture series. Visitors will also be able to explore the cutting edge research and public programs that are so integral to the museum’s past and present and will be encouraged to share their vision for the museum’s future.

The new Web site will contain a host of special features about the planning, construction and early years of the museum, drawing on oral histories, archival photographs, diaries, films, field notebooks, early annual reports – and even reports from curators on expeditions around the world. The site also will offer special multi-media highlights of memorable expeditions – such as Teddy Roosevelt’s famous joint trek with the Smithsonian through East Africa 100 years ago – and in-depth stories of the acquisition of many of the museum’s iconic items, from the Allende Meteorite and the Hope Diamond to the Fenykovi Elephant in the Rotunda, which was the largest land mammal in any museum at the time of its unveiling in 1959.

Centennial celebration offerings in the next year include:

- **Photography Exhibition: Celebrating 100 Years** – Beginning on May 29, 2010, and running through March 20, 2011, the museum will showcase more than 60 archival and modern photographs highlighting many facets of the Museum – its people, collections, exhibitions, and outreach through the years.
- **Then and Now Signs** – From now through the end of the year, the museum will feature 16 portable signs throughout the building highlighting the changes in exhibitions and public spaces over the past century. (For example, visitors will learn that where the new David H. Koch Hall of Human Origins is today, there once was an exhibit of domesticated chickens.)
- **Share Your Story** – Beginning in late May and running through March 20, 2011, visitors to the museum will be able to record their personal special memories of visits to the museum at an interactive kiosk. Selections from these visitor video recordings will be used on the museum’s [YouTube channel](#) and on the Centennial Celebration Web site.

- **Scientific Collecting During World War II** – In time for Veteran’s Day, the museum will feature a special Constitution Avenue Lobby Case detailing the little-known role of the Smithsonian and its scientists and researchers during World War II, including preparation of survival manuals and natural history guides for U.S. military personnel, and the specimens and collection items soldiers sent back to the Smithsonian.
- **Museum Stories Project** – The museum is conducting an Oral History Project as part of its centennial, gathering interviews with people who represent the wide range of specialists – from scientists, engineers, technicians, collections managers, educators, and volunteers – whose efforts have contributed to making carrying out its mission over the years. These oral histories will become part of the Web site.
- **Public Celebrations** – Throughout the year, visitors to the museum will be invited to take part in numerous fun and engaging activities to celebrate these first 100 years, and imagine what the next century will bring to the exciting world of science and natural history.

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W. in Washington, D.C., welcomed more than 7 million visitors in 2008, making it the most visited museum in the United States. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Admission is free. More information about the museum is available at [www.mnh.si.edu](http://www.mnh.si.edu) or by calling (202) 633-1000, TTY (202) 633-5285. In addition to the Web site, learn more about public programs, get the latest updates and access to insider videos and images via [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#), [Twitter](#) and YouTube.

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