Natural History Museum takes you inside the Darwin Centre

05/09/2009

- See the hidden scientific life of the Museum for the first time
- Millions of plants and insects revealed in hub of world-class life sciences research
- Major supporters include the Heritage Lottery Fund (£20.5 million), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (£10.7 million) and the Wellcome Trust (£10 million)

You will be able to journey deep into the heart of the eight-storey cocoon, glimpse the working life of our scientists in collections storage areas and laboratories, quiz scientists about their cutting-edge research, view specially created natural history footage in the high-tech Attenborough Studio or interact with the 12-metre Climate Change Wall – all opening up the hidden world of the Natural History Museum's scientific collections and research.

The new £78 million Darwin Centre is a state-of-the-art scientific research and collections facility that is used by over 200 scientists at a time. It is an awe-inspiring public space, inviting you to explore the natural world in an exciting and innovative way. The architectural highlight is a 65-metre-long, eight-storey-high cocoon – the largest sprayed concrete, curved structure in Europe. It safeguards the 17 million insect and three million plant specimens held in the building.

Entrance to the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum is free. You can experience:

Cocoon – travel through the Cocoon experience deep into the heart of the collections to glimpse the working life of our scientists and the previously hidden world of scientific research. Through viewing decks, video, intercom and over 40 high-tech installations and hands-on interactive activities, you can experience how scientists travel to discover and name new species, prepare specimens and organise collections, and how these are being used to help fight malaria or react to climate change.

NaturePlus – take a NaturePlus card with you to personalise your journey around Cocoon. Use it to collect your favourite exhibits and specimens – from butterflies to a rhino beetle – and then discover more online at home, where you can also join in discussions with Museum scientists.

Attenborough Studio – the Attenborough Studio is a state-of-the-art communication centre. Innovative technology, Museum specimens, live animals, spectacular natural history film footage and Museum scientists come together to create an inspiring programme of free daily films and live events.

Climate Change Wall – interact with the un-missable 12-metre wall of screens. They display films and interactive graphics that spotlight Earth's changing climate and how the Museum's research informs global efforts to understand that change.

Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity – a new resource centre for people or organisations with an interest in UK natural history. Much of the Museum's UK collections are available here for amateur naturalists to study and visitors are encouraged to bring in their own finds and meet the Centre's dedicated enquiries staff.

Architecture – explore this architecturally stunning building with breathtaking views from the eight-storey cocoon, look over the west London skyline, into the Wildlife Garden and up close to the Museum's original terracotta façade.

Notes to editors

Information about Darwin Centre
Dates: open from 15 September 2009
Opening times: every day, 10am–5.50pm (last admission to Cocoon 5pm)
Admission: free, to book timed tickets for Cocoon call 020 7942 5725, visit the museum in person or log on to the website.
Nearest tube: South Kensington
www.nhm.ac.uk