MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Free Entry

MUSEUM GUIDE & HIGHLIGHTS

www.museum.zoo.cam.ac.uk

WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY, CAMBRIDGE

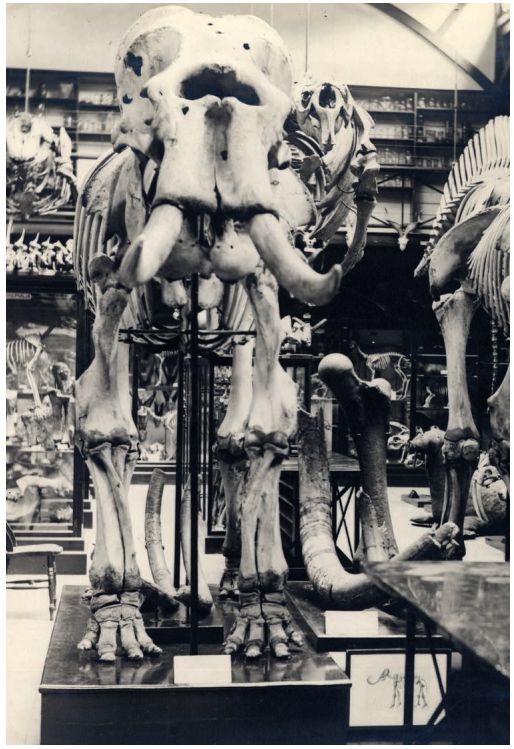
The Museum houses one of the largest and most important natural history collections in the UK, with an extraordinarily rich history dating back to 1814. The Museum today displays thousands of incredible specimens and offers visitors an insight into the wonders of animal life.

The Museum is part of the University's Department of Zoology.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Museum of Zoology started life as two separate collections: the Museum of Comparative Anatomy, whose earliest collections date from 1814, and the collection of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, which was founded in 1819. These came together on our current site in 1865. The 1865 building was demolished in 1965, making way for a new museum, opening in 1970. The Museum you see today has been completely refurbished, to include the glass entrance hall, within which hangs our huge fin whale. The refurbishment was supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and took five years to complete, opening in 2018.

Most of our specimen collection was acquired between 1865 and 1915, although we continue to collect new material each year.



Front cover shows: Shoebill
Top: Lower Gallery today
Bottom: Museum display from circa 1890

1.
FIN WHALE

One of Cambridge's iconic landmarks and our largest specimen is the 21-metre-long fin whale. It is the world's second largest species of whale. Our specimen was washed up at Pevensey Bay in Sussex in 1865, and it came to the Museum a year later. Five more whales hang above the upper gallery, including a rare two-tusked narwhal.

2.
DODO

Dodos were large flightless pigeons, found only in Mauritius. Having evolved with no natural predators, they were easy prey for hunters and the animals they brought with them, once ships started to stop on the island. First discovered in 1598, dodos were extinct by 1690. The Museum has one of the most complete dodo skeletons in the world.

3.
CIRCULAR SAW SHELL
also known as CAPTAIN COOK'S SHELL

This circular saw shell was collected in the Cook Strait, New Zealand on James Cook's second voyage to the Pacific (1772–1775). Cook's voyages massively increased Britain's geographic knowledge, and paved the way for later invasions and colonisations.

4.
ACANTHOSTEGA AND *ICHTHYOSTEGA*

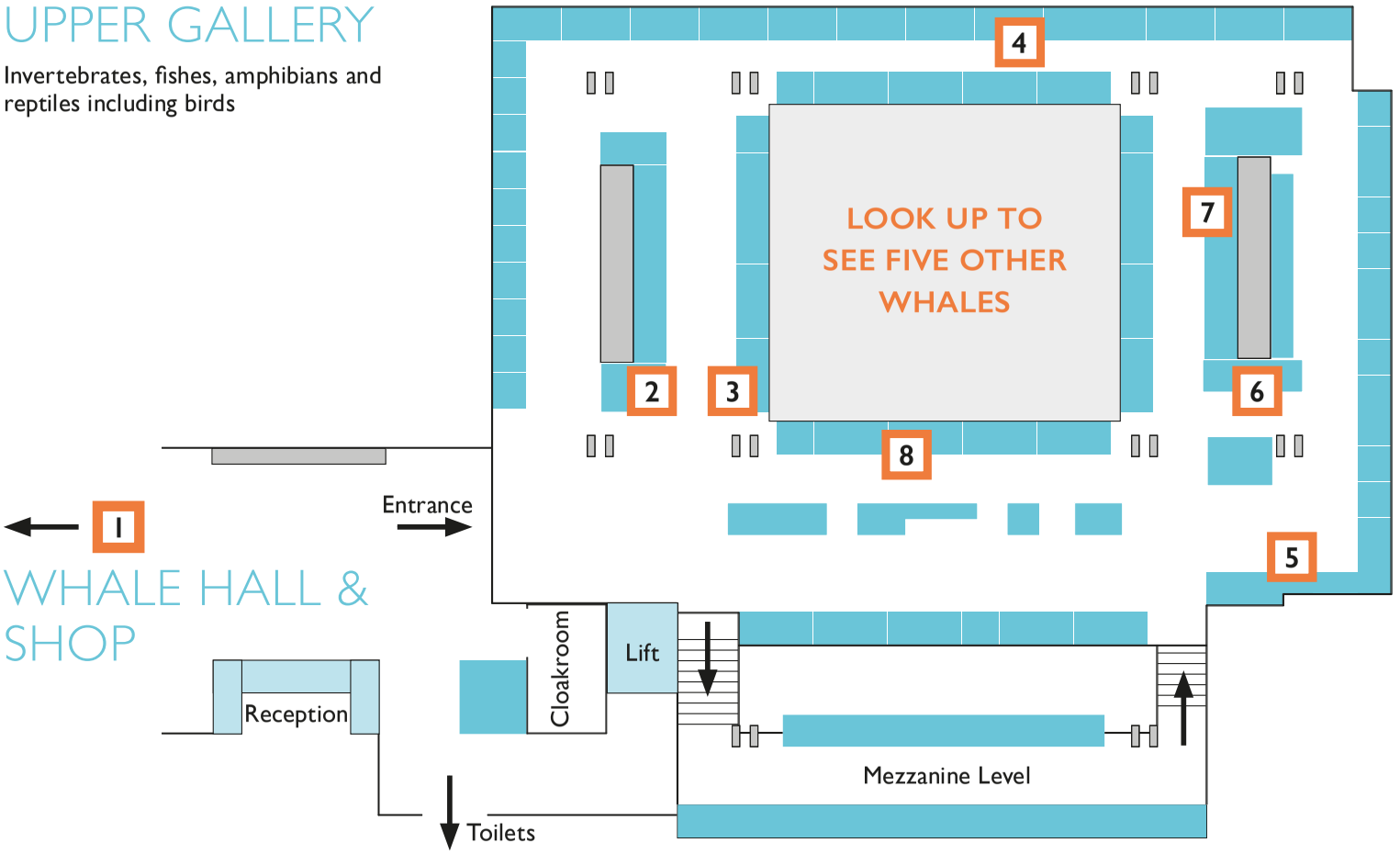
Work by Professor Jenny Clack (1947–2020) on these *Acanthostega* and *Ichthyostega* fossils from the Devonian Period, over 360 million years ago, has revolutionised our understanding of the origin of limbs in vertebrates – helping us to understand how our distant ancestors evolved to live on land.

5.
HUIA

The differences between the beaks of the males and females of these extinct New Zealanders are among the most extreme of any bird, allowing them to hunt insects differently: female huia used their curved, narrow bills to probe beetle burrows in living wood, while males used their stouter bills to dig into rotting wood. They were driven to extinction at the start of the twentieth century, through the loss of their old-growth forests, over-hunting and introduced pests. Huia were important birds in Māori culture.

UPPER GALLERY

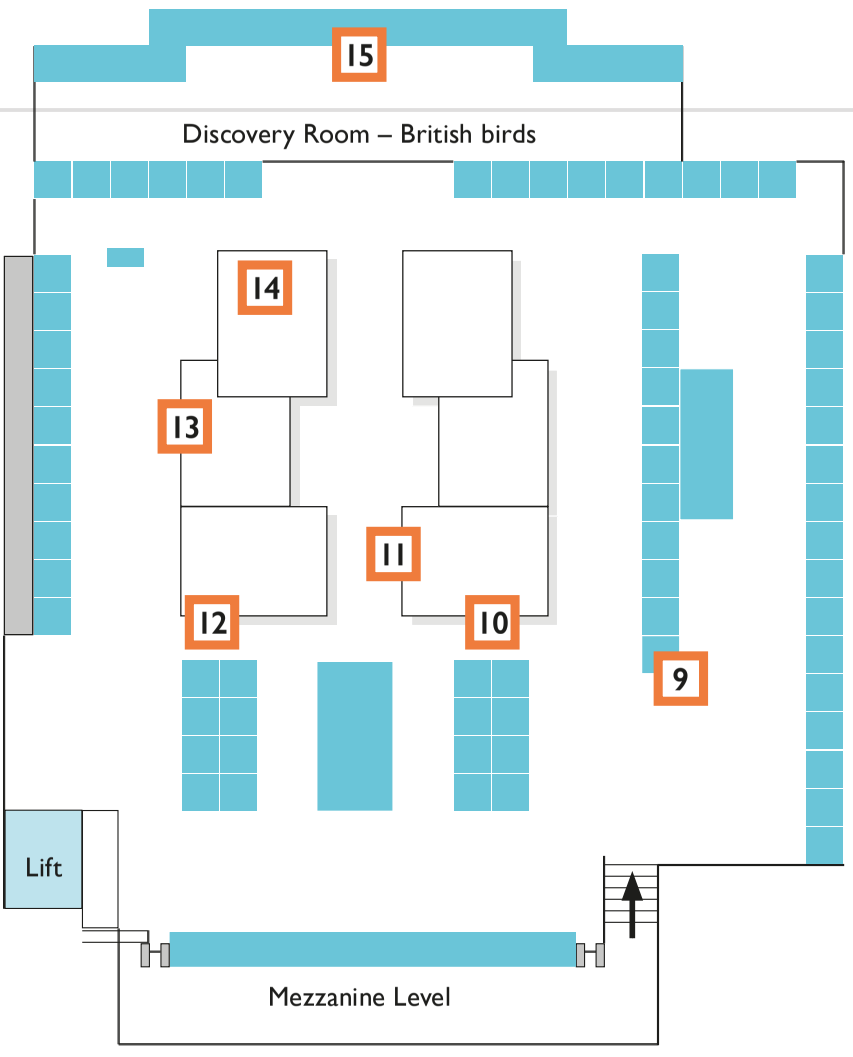
Invertebrates, fishes, amphibians and reptiles including birds



WHALE HALL & SHOP

LOWER GALLERY

Mammals, Explorations Stations and British birds



Whale Hall

1 FIN WHALE

Upper gallery

2 DODO

3 CIRCULAR SAW SHELL

4 *ACANTHOSTEGA* and *ICHTHYOSTEGA*

5 HUIA

6 KOMODO DRAGON

7 RODRIGUES SOLITAIRE

8 INSECT DISPLAY

Lower gallery

9 EGG LAYING MAMMALS

10 THE DARWIN COLLECTION

11 ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE SPECIMENS

12 GIANT GROUND SLOTH

13 HYDROTHERMAL VENT

14 ASIAN ELEPHANT

15 DISCOVERY ROOM

6.
KOMODO DRAGON

Komodo dragons are the largest living lizards on Earth, reaching up to 3 metres long. They only live on certain Indonesian islands, where they prey on large animals such as buffalo, deer and pigs. Like other monitor lizards, they are more closely related to snakes than to some other lizards.

7.
RODRIGUES SOLITAIRE

Like dodos, their famous relatives, solitaires are giant extinct flightless pigeons, which evolved on an island in the Indian Ocean – Rodrigues – in the absence of predators. They disappeared in the mid-1700s, soon after humans arrived. Males stood almost a metre tall and used unique bony knobs on their wings like boxing gloves to fight other solitaires.

8.
INSECT DISPLAY

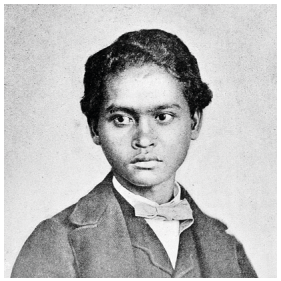
The Museum's largest collection is of insects: we are home to over a million of them, from tiny flies and beetles to moths and butterflies. The information attached to these specimens helps us understand how humans have been altering the environment over the last two centuries. Only a tiny fraction of our insect collection is on display.

9.
EGG-LAYING MAMMALS – THE CAMBRIDGE STORY

Platypuses and echidnas were at the centre of many scientific debates after Europeans first encountered them in the 1790s. It took until 1884 to finally prove that they are mammals that lay eggs, when the young Cambridge biologist William Caldwell worked with 150 Indigenous Australians to describe every stage of their babies' growth.

10.
THE DARWIN COLLECTION

The Museum holds one of the largest collections of Charles Darwin's own specimens, showing how he developed his career. As a student here (1828–1831), he collected beetles around Cambridge instead of going to lectures. The animals he brought back from the voyage aboard HMS *Beagle* (1831–1836) became evidence for his evolutionary theories. He then spent eight years studying barnacles, to demonstrate his biological abilities before publishing his revolutionary work.



11.
ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE SPECIMENS

Wallace co-discovered evolution by natural selection (with Darwin), and founded biogeography – the science of where species live – during his voyage to the Malay Archipelago. Like most scientists, he did not work alone. Local field assistants working with Wallace made huge contributions to the history of science, for example a teenager called Ali (pictured left) from Sarawak caught and prepared many of the birds in Wallace's collection, and described their natural history.

12.
GIANT GROUND SLOTH

This is the only real giant ground sloth skeleton on display in the UK. Reaching up to 6 metres long, these South American herbivores were among the largest mammals ever to walk the Earth. They became extinct around 10,000 years ago, shortly after humans arrived in the region.

13.
HYDROTHERMAL VENT

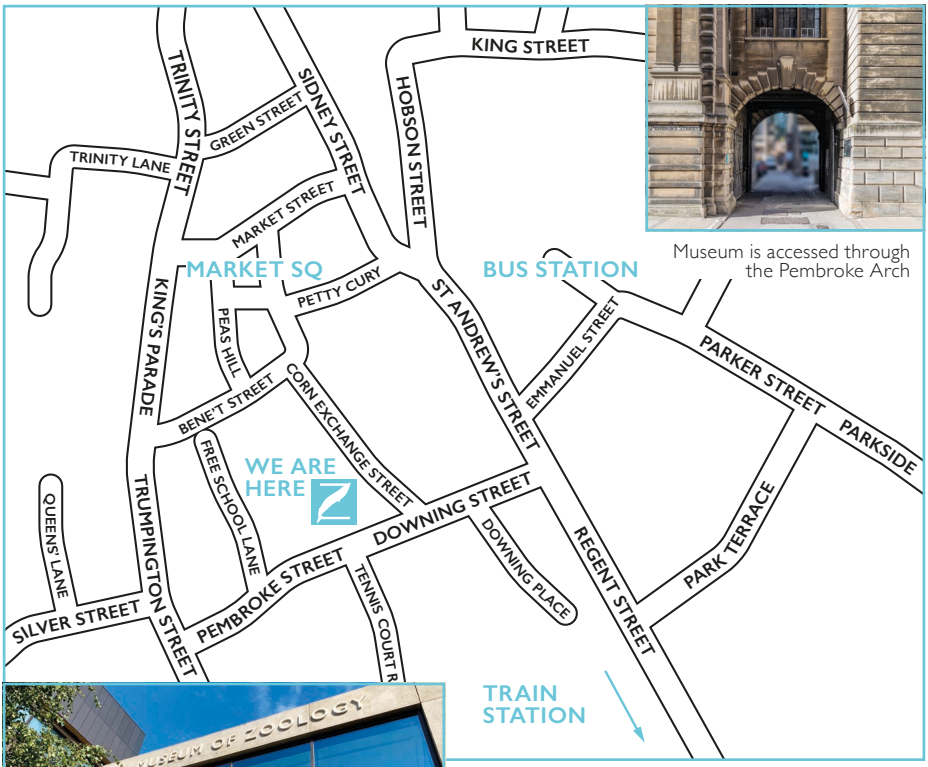
Hydrothermal vents are naturally formed structures found deep in the ocean. This one was collected in 2010 by the British Antarctic Survey, 2,400 metres below the surface on the East Scotia Ridge of the Southern Ocean. The vents release extremely hot mineral-rich waters, which support a whole ecosystem including yeti crabs, snails and sea spiders.

14.
ASIAN ELEPHANT

Our Asian elephant skeleton appeared in the extended opening sequence of 1967 Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Some of the leg bones are rough and deformed, showing signs of injury or infection. It was shot by Sri Lankan authorities in 1881, describing it as a 'rogue elephant, that had done much damage to life and property'.

15.
DISCOVERY ROOM

Our Discovery Room is devoted to British birds, with over 200 taxidermy specimens on display. The gallery highlights birds currently at risk due to habitat loss and climate change, but also displays some conservation success stories such as the red kite.



Museum is accessed through the Pembroke Arch

MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

David Attenborough Building
Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ

01223 336650
umzc@zoo.cam.ac.uk
www.museum.zoo.cam.ac.uk
ZoologyMuseum
ZoologyMuseumCambridge
museumofzoology

Tuesday to Saturday: 10am–4:30pm
Sunday: 12 noon–4:30pm
Monday: Closed
Open Bank Holiday Mondays: 12 noon–4.30pm
Shop and Café also open: see website
FREE ENTRY
Access to the Museum is step free.
There is no parking at the Museum.

FIND US:

On foot: The Museum is in the David Attenborough Building in the heart of Cambridge City Centre. Find us on the New Museums Site, through the Pembroke Arch on Downing Street.
By car: The nearest car park is the multi-storey Grand Arcade car park.
By bus: The Museum is a five minute walk from the main bus station at Drummer Street.
By train: Central Cambridge station is a 20 minute walk.

SUPPORT US:

You can help us keep entry to the Museum free. Your donation enables us to care for our collections and share them for learning and research.

To find out how, please visit:
www.museum.zoo.cam.ac.uk/about-us/support-us
or email umzc@zoo.cam.ac.uk

HERITAGE FUND
Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
ACCREDITED MUSEUM
Designated Outstanding Collection
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE MUSEUMS & BOTANIC GARDEN