

Natural Sciences Museum

Annual Review

2025 / 2026

NATURAL SCIENCES MUSEUM

The Natural Sciences Museum Annual Review 2025 / 2026 was compiled from the data gathered from the heads of Conservation and Education.

Photographs are by members of staff unless stated otherwise.

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Chairman's Introduction

It has been a significant and rewarding year for the Natural Sciences Museum, and I am extremely proud of what our staff and volunteers have achieved.

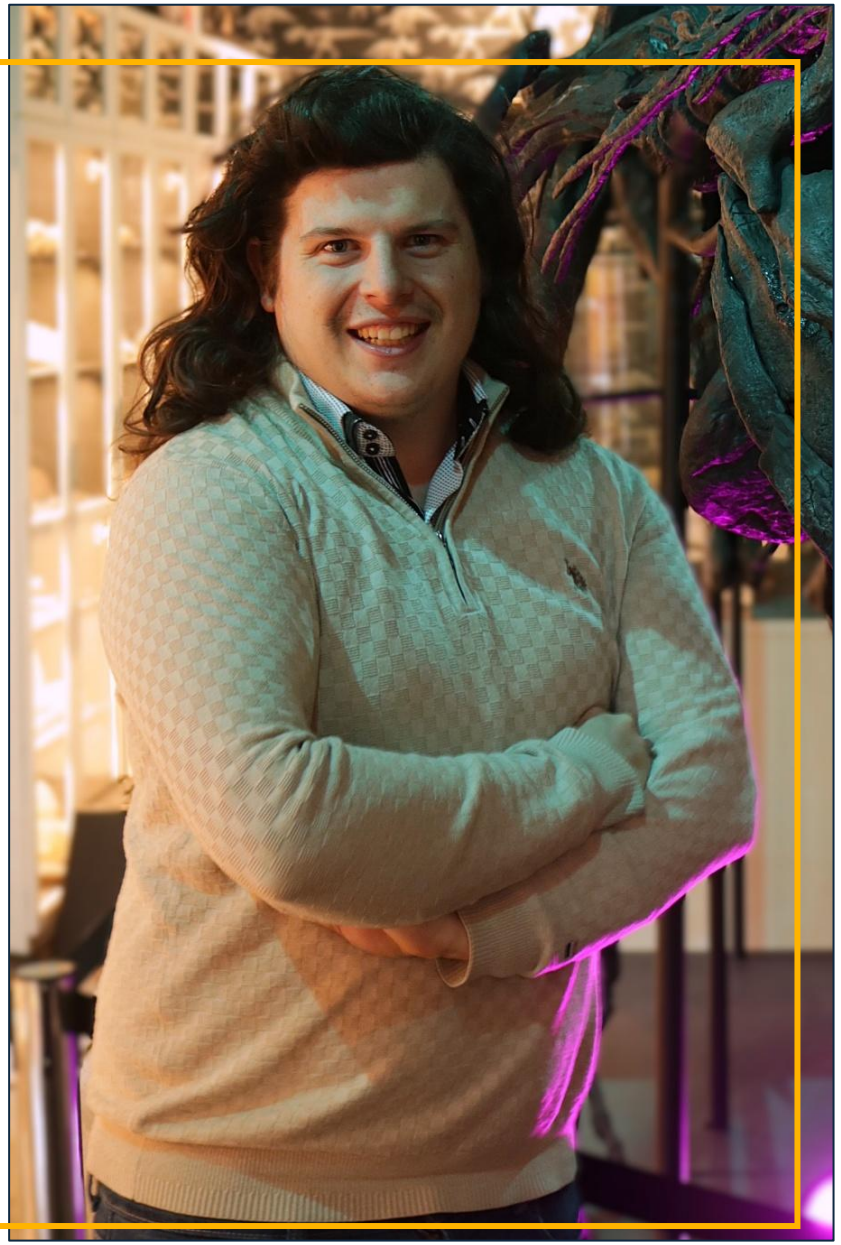
Highlights have included the Dragons in the Earth exhibition, alongside important scientific research and development work taking place behind the scenes. Together, these activities reflect the Museum's charitable purpose: advancing knowledge and making the natural sciences engaging and accessible to the public.

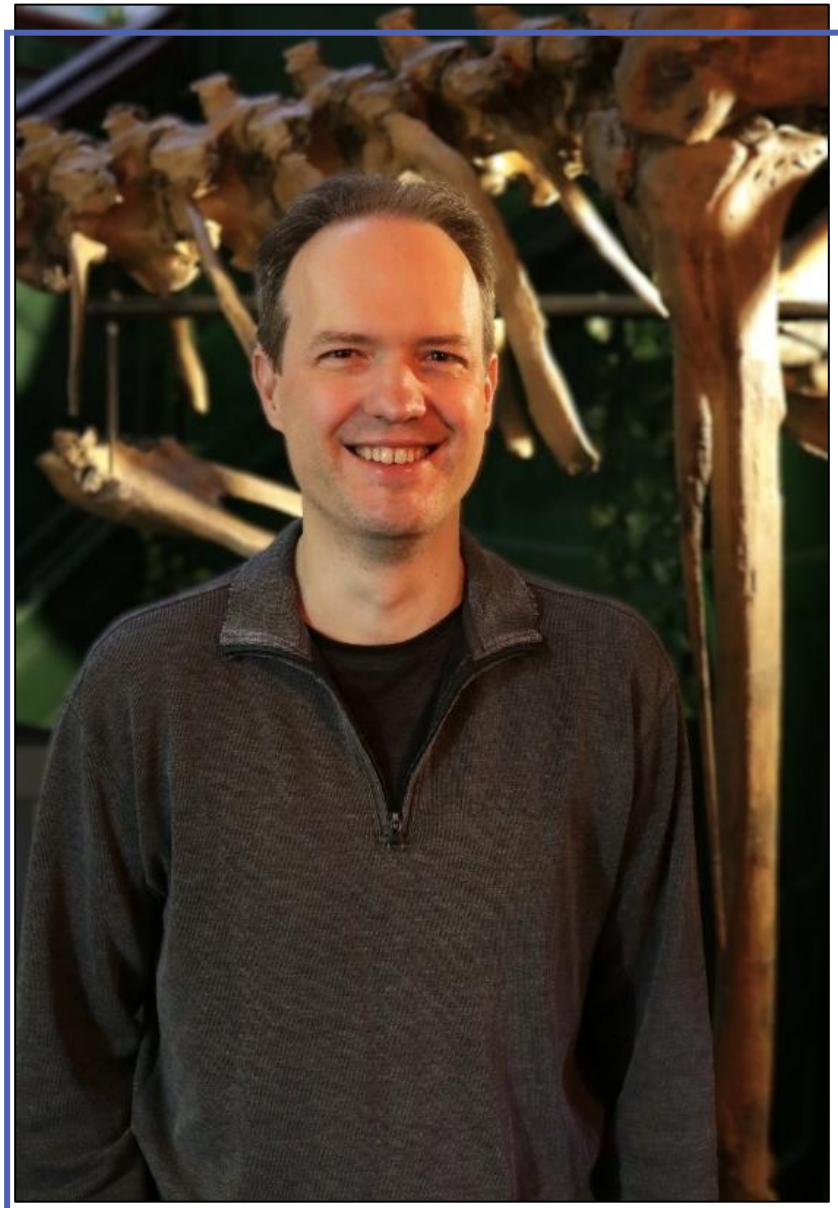
It has been particularly rewarding to see the Museum grow and extend the benefit it provides to visitors and the wider community. My sincere thanks go to everyone whose dedication has made this possible.

Looking ahead I am excited for the opening of Monsters in the Sea and seeing how the public responds to the exhibition in the year ahead.

James Hogg

Chairman of the Trustees





Director’s Introduction

We measure time in years, from the length of our lives to the eons and eras contained in our museums. There is something about being back in the same position in front of sun that makes us want to take stock, but this is not arbitrary for us. This year is bookended by two key events for our institution. Almost a year ago, we received our charity registration (no.1214909), inaugurating us as the Natural Sciences Museum. This is a recognition that we exist as a public benefit for the advancement of science and education.

More recently, we were awarded Working Towards Accreditation status by the Arts Council England, initiating a multi-year process towards full accreditation that we aim to complete in a year. In addition, we have been assigned our MDA code from the Collections Trust so that our museum and our specimens now carry a unique acronym to identify them.

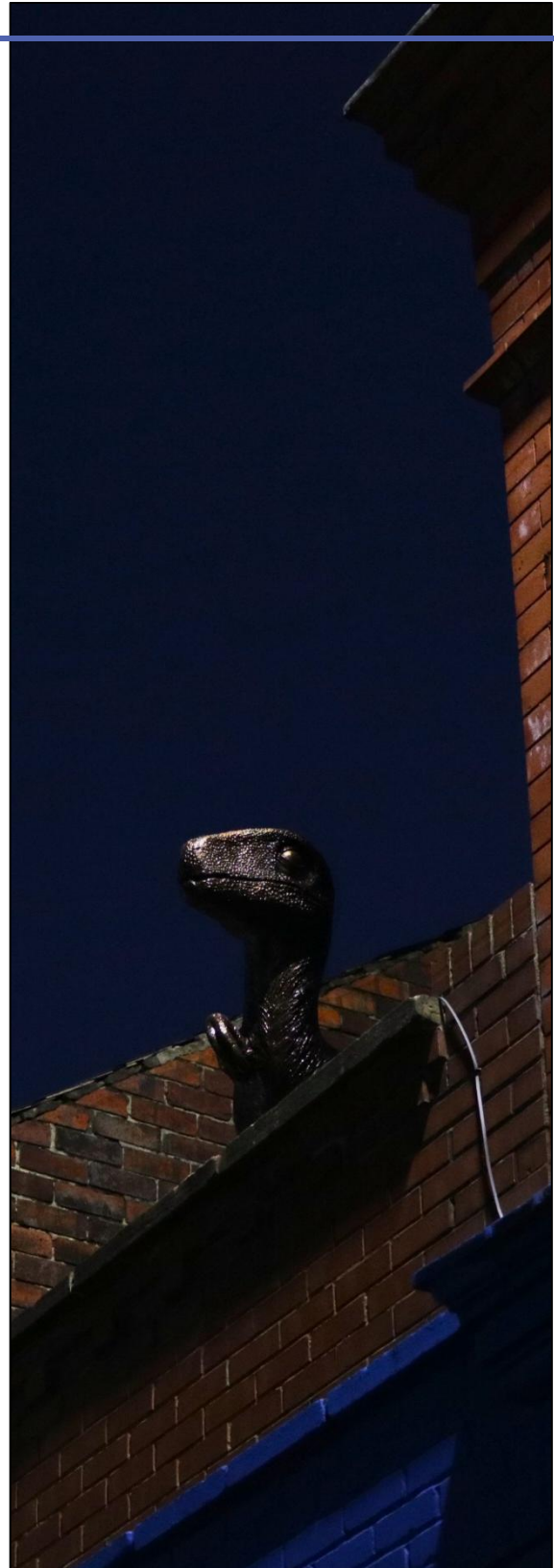
The true measure of a museum, however, is more the people it contains than the specimens it houses. We are pleased to

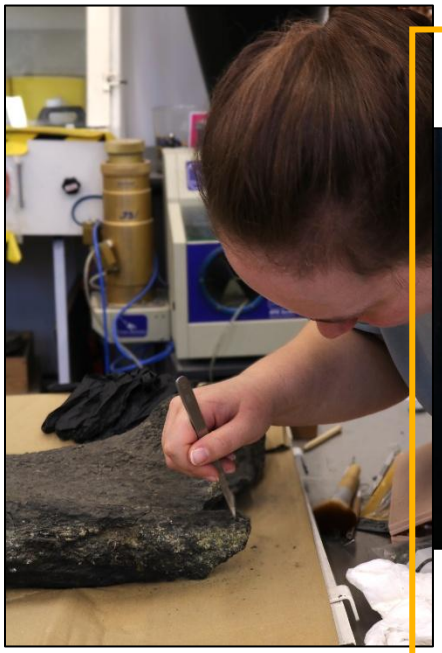
welcome our new members Drs Keeble and Salmonsmith in research and preparation positions. Our former volunteers Anne-Marie O'Neill and Harry Loukes have also taken on new roles in administration and exhibitions. Finally, we are excited that our continuing and new volunteers Tom, Joe, Keira, Georgia, Fergus, and Callum have combined their personal growth with the growth of our museum.

Continuing our commitment to science and education, we have opened two new exhibits this year, both designed and installed in house. Currently taking up the majority of our gallery space is our first major exhibit, *Dragons in the Earth*. Its displays trace the evolution of ferocious dinosaurs into flying birds over mythology and millions of years. Our first minor exhibit is no less small. Our stairwell contains displays on the moa, including a life-size skeleton of a giant moa. Although we can no longer claim to be the youngest museum in the England, we have traded that distinction for a museum growing in size and recognition, which is a trade we gladly make.

Dr. Brian Andres

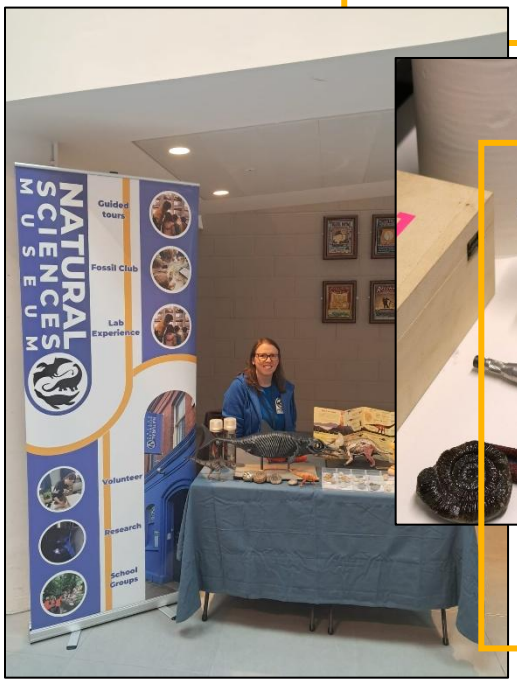
Director

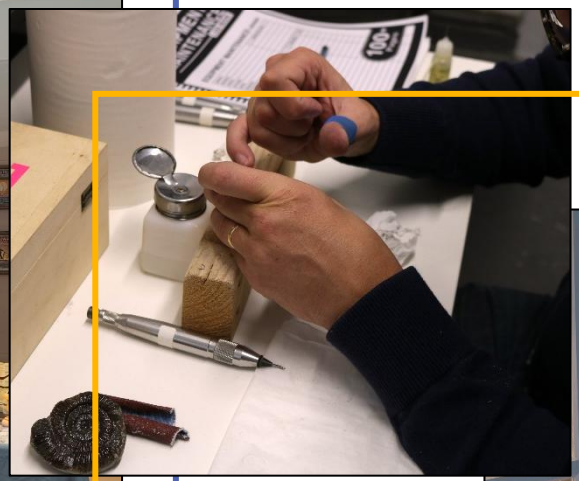









NATURAL SCIENCES MUSEUM
Guided tours
Fossil Club
Lab Experience
Volunteer
Research
School Groups





About Us

Our annual review takes you through the museum's achievements over the past year and looks forward to our plans for the next. Our dedicated staff and volunteers have worked hard to make this an incredible year, and we are proud to share what we have accomplished with you.

Founded four years ago as the Yorkshire Natural History Museum and succeeded by the registered charity of the Natural Sciences Museum last year, the museum was created to bring natural history to Sheffield communities. We aim to educate and inspire people from all ages and backgrounds to love and appreciate the world around them and under their feet.

Over the past twelve months, the museum has grown, welcoming several new members of staff, volunteers, and visitors. We've branched into new departments, expanded our educational offerings, and focused on developing the collection and how we store and display it.

We hope next year will be even bigger and better as we work towards Museum Accreditation. With new exhibits planned, including those showcasing marine and flying reptiles, displays will change meaning that guests can return and enjoy the museum again and again.



The Year in Numbers



474 Objects Displayed

Through our permanent and temporary displays, we've shared 439 fossils and minerals from our collection with our visitors, alongside 21 skeletal mounts and 13 life restorations.



Image credit: Pete M through Tripadvisor

13 Institution Visits

From nursery to retirement, we've had learning groups of all ages booked in for a tour and a talk about science, fossils, and the natural world.

970 Educational Sessions

Fossil club has been thriving this year, with 735 sessions booked and many repeat customers! Homeschool has been steadily building too, with 235 sessions booked since September.

2439 Visitors

This year our guest book has recorded visitors from 22 counties across England. Some people have come from even further afield, with 11 different countries also being recorded!





460 Bookings

Over 180 people have booked onto our Guided Tours, enabling them to delve deeper into the history and importance of the objects on display, led by one of our brilliant Tour Guides. A further 230 have dipped their toes into fossil preparation, being the first to reveal the surface of their ammonite.

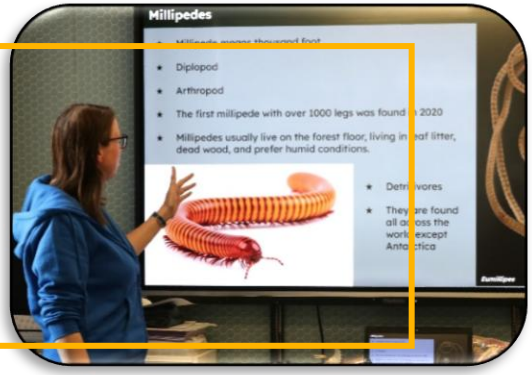
2516 Hours of Volunteers

Over this last year our fantastic volunteers have helped us to make the collection more accessible, through curation, guided tours and gallery supervision.

Education



This year Anne-Marie was introduced as our Educational Officer. She has been working on building and expanding our outreach, educational resources, and direct interaction teaching children. This has led to the increased number of children attending fossil club, the expansion of our homeschool, and many schools visiting or being visited.



Fossil Club is a mainstay of the museum, running every Sunday for children ages 5 to 14. The classes have covered topics from *Deinonychus* to jellyfish, and bioluminescence to earthquakes. Combining hands-on crafting with a presentation on the week's topic, fossil club is designed to engage all types of learners.



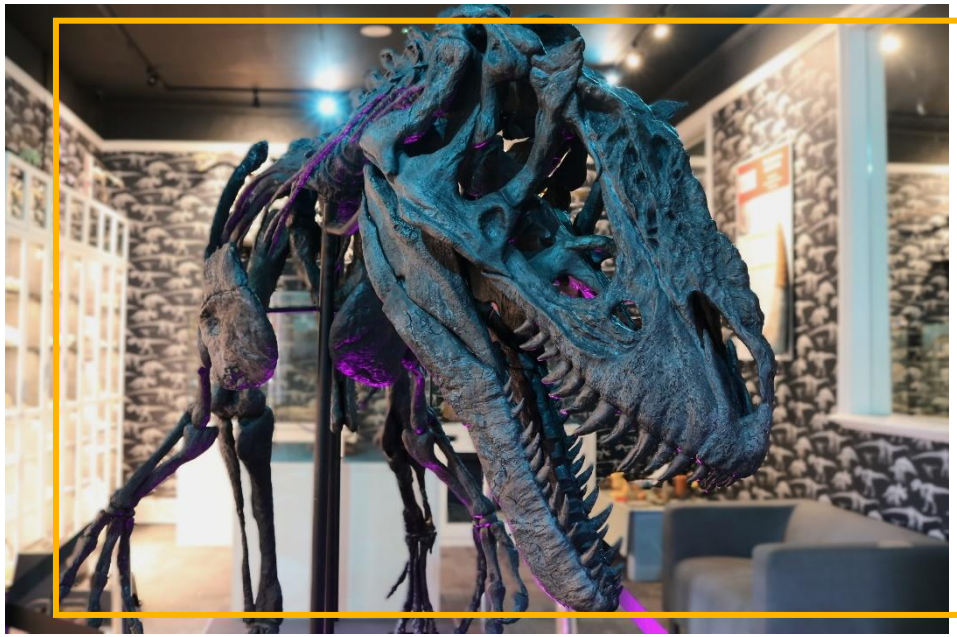
Image credit:
Pete M through
Tripadvisor

Our 'Talk and a Tour' sessions enable educational groups to visit for an in-depth exploration of the objects in our collection. Groups such as U3A and the Royal Society of Biology have delved into technical lectures on the science of palaeontology, while school groups have enjoyed their first interactions with physical pieces of the planet's history, accompanied by a talk tailored to the curriculum.

Last year we introduced our Homeschooling classes. These small, interactive sessions are designed to supplement the science module, encouraging research, critical thinking and creativity.

The group has been steadily growing, with a consistent core group of return students.

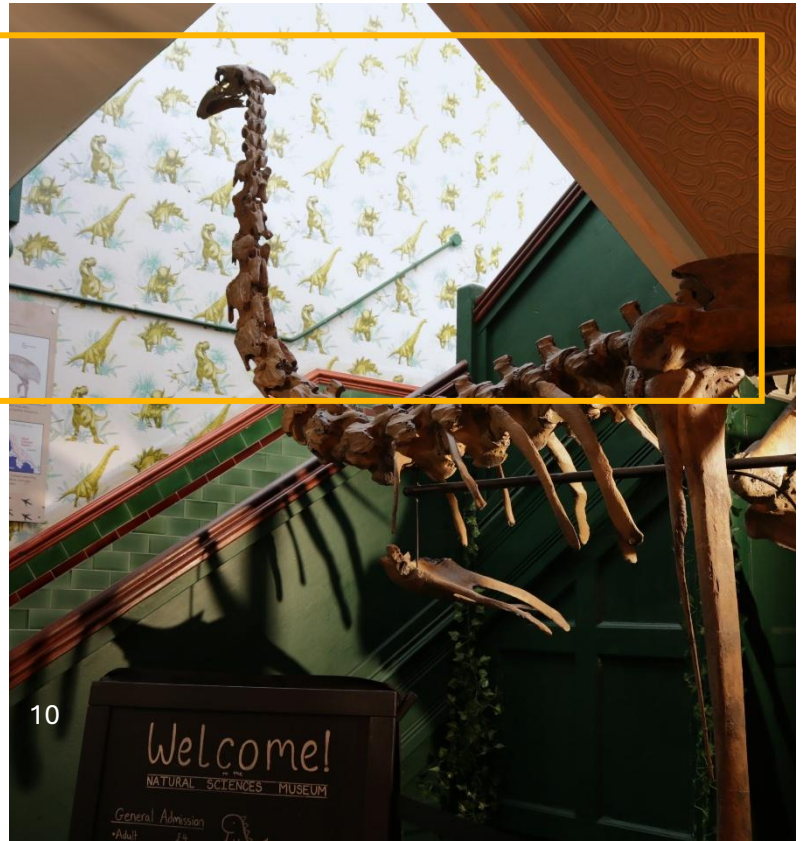




Exhibitions

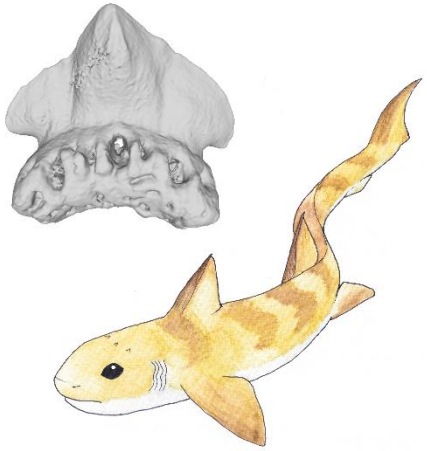
Our showstopper display this year has been Rory the *Yutyrannus* from our 'Dragons in the Earth' exhibition. The 3D-printed model was named by the children of fossil club and delighted visitors while we were open over the summer holidays. The exhibition is themed around the dinosaurs of Asia and takes the viewer along the evolutionary path of the development of feathers.

Following on Rory's success, we also introduced our 'Footsteps of the Moa' exhibition in the entrance to the Museum. This explores the life, extinction, and subsequent rediscovery of these enormous birds. Starting at the bottom of the stairs and leading up, the exhibition helps to draw visitors into the museum and provides a welcoming introductory display.



Currently we're gearing up to our next big exhibition, the 'Monsters in the Sea'. This will be showing off fossils of the creatures of the sea during the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous.

Research Projects



A Tiny Shark

Our preparator, Dr. Emily Keeble recently published a paper on a new species of hybodont shark: *Lonchidium minimorsus*. The species name means ‘tiny bite’, reflecting how small the teeth in the study, and the animal they came from were. These teeth are also useful for correlating the ages of different fossil sites in the southwestern USA.



Hilda the Plesiosaur

A star object in the collection is being studied in the hopes of increasing our knowledge of this unique specimen and how it fits into our understanding of the Jurassic marine environment of Britain. Harry Loukes, a part-time member of staff, has just completed the first year of his PhD where he is studying our plesiosaur, affectionately nicknamed ‘Hilda’.



Boxes on Boxes

Best practise and our knowledge of chemical interactions is constantly changing. As new knowledge becomes available, we update how we look after our collection. Most recently, we’ve been testing the materials that we use to store each specimen, ensuring that they’ll be safe for decades to come.

Fossil Preparation





We've had lots of fossils pass through the lab this year, from ammonites to dinosaur bones.

Over 230 ammonites have been prepared and taken home by guests on our lab experiences. Recently, preparation volunteers have joined the team and have been getting up to speed on how to clean and fix fossils. They use the same air scribes as our preparator has used to remove rock from plesiosaurs Harry and Hilda – two important specimens being researched in our collection.

Prep and conservation have also been working hard to stabilise and treat pyrite decay in another plesiosaur, Mike, and an iguanodon thigh bone. Pyrite decay happens when the unstable mineral pyrite, which is commonly found in fossils from the UK, is exposed to water and oxygen, making it difficult to prevent. We can however, treat it to remove the products of the reaction, slowing it and helping to save the fossils from further damage.

Our Innovation Lab has also been busy this year, researching fossil preparation, and developing new tools and methods to remove different types of matrix. Our preparator and engineer have been working together to create a new air scribe, aiming to combat common preparation problems.

Volunteers and Work Experience



Our volunteers are integral to the running of the museum and the experience we're able to offer our visitors. Over the last few months, we've been creating distinct roles, so that we can best match people with their interests and skills.

We've been delighted with the response, and how many people are excited to get hands on with our collection and sharing their knowledge with us and our visitors.

We've also offered work experience placements for a few students this year, giving them an insight into museum life across the various roles.

In curation, they've have been helping us to better organise our collection and get it to a point where we can start looking at digitisation. In the labs, we've had Lab Assistants developing their skills in fossil preparation, enabling us to uncover more prehistoric creatures and plants to be displayed and studied in the future.

Each week our Gallery Guides have been instrumental in providing our visitors with an informative, detailed, and most importantly enjoyable experience. They have delved into the research around the objects on display to be able to answer any questions thrown at them and have been truly central to our growth this year.

It's not just us who think our volunteers are fantastic though, it's our visitors.



Visitor Reviews

Both online and in our guestbook, the reviews we've received have been glowing, and we appreciate each of them. A few of the things that have been highlighted are:



The lab experience and being able to reveal an ammonite



Seeing how different minerals and materials fluoresce under ultraviolet light



Guided tours and explanations of displays. And Jerry the shark.



Fossil club, homeschool and crafting opportunities for children



Our exhibitions, changing displays, and models.



The handling table and the chance for children to hold and study real fossils



The wide range of fossils and objects on display and how they've been presented. And Frank.



Our lovely wallpaper (courtesy of NHM x Dunelm!)

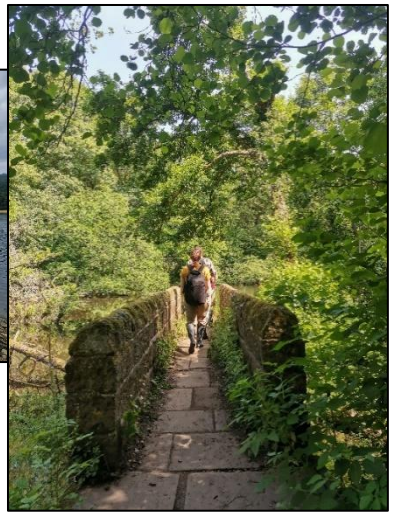
And most frequently of all, visitors have praised our informative, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff and volunteers.

Fieldwork



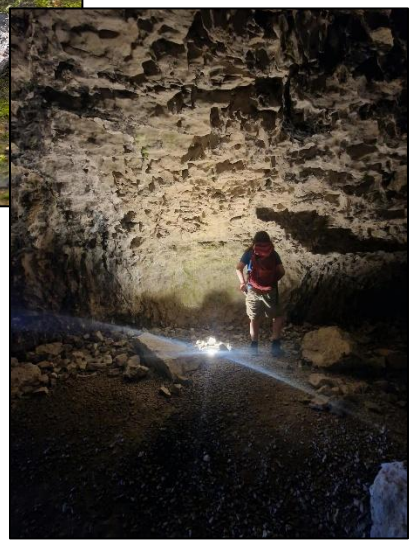












This year we focused on the nearby localities for our fieldtrips, staying within Yorkshire.

Our most local fieldwork saw us stay within Sheffield, visiting sites known for their Carboniferous goniatites (ammonite like cephalopods). This site was known historically but hadn't been visited in decades before the museum's trip.

We also went to Ravenscar on the Yorkshire Coast where we hunted for marine invertebrates that lived in the warm shallow seas of Jurassic England. We found a great number of bivalves and ammonites, including some rarer species, along with meeting some of the local wildlife.

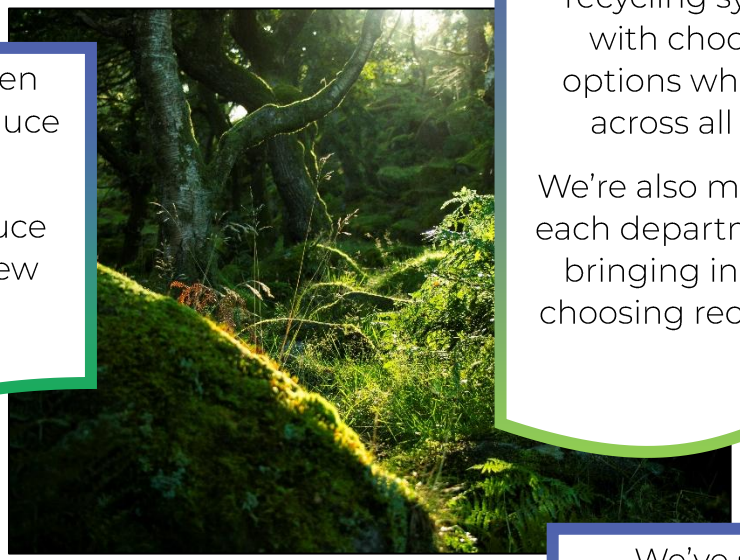
Environmental Impact

We're constantly working to identify areas where we can improve and reduce our impact on the environment. This year we are working on a few improvements:



We are switching to a green energy supplier to help reduce our carbon footprint.

We're also working to reduce our energy use, finding new ways to save electricity



We're aiming to improve our recycling systems, starting with choosing reusable options where appropriate across all departments.

We're also making it easier for each department to recycling, bringing in more bins, and choosing recyclable materials

Each year we take the fossil club and homeschool children on a walk into Rivelin Valley to teach them about the local fauna and flora, and encourage their interest in the natural world



We're implementing schemes to reduce our laboratories' impact. As a part of this we have been saving the nitrile gloves worn by our staff and lab experiencers to send for recycling rather than disposal

We've switched from plastic-based cotton swabs to paper and wood, reducing the waste and making them more sustainable.



Building Renovation

In celebration of the formation of the Natural Sciences Museum charity, we decided to give our building some TLC. The most dramatic change we made was to freshen the frontage up with some blue paint. This bright, inviting colour has been much admired by our visitors.

We've also hung up new banners to help people spot us, in our new colour scheme and with fun patterns that feel more in-line with our brand.

Even the dinosaur on the roof has had a makeover! The model was originally painted in a realistic style and had then been covered in a dark green layer. Years of exposure to the Sheffield climate had caused the paint to crack and flake.

We removed all the loose paint to make a stable base, and built up layers to give it a warm bronze effect that will hopefully last for a good many years to come.



Image credit: Google maps



Image credit: Google maps



Plans for next year and Beyond



We have big plans coming up, and we hope that you'll join us for this exciting year.

We're working towards gaining Museum Accreditation, and also aim to start digitising objects in the near future, meaning that we can make the collection available and accessible to even more people.

As we head into Winter, we're preparing for the next few exhibitions, bringing the 'Monsters in the Sea' to life ready for the Christmas holidays. It won't then be long before our Triassic display takes over the stairwell, showing off the weird and wonderful creatures that roamed the planet.

In the labs, several projects are underway to prepare and conserve some of our largest specimens, and as our Lab Assistants progress, they'll be joining us in working on some of our marine reptile material.

Next summer we are welcoming back our voluntary Internship, with hands-on learning for palaeontology students, with a whole host of practical experiences prepared for them.









NATURAL SCIENCES MUSEUM