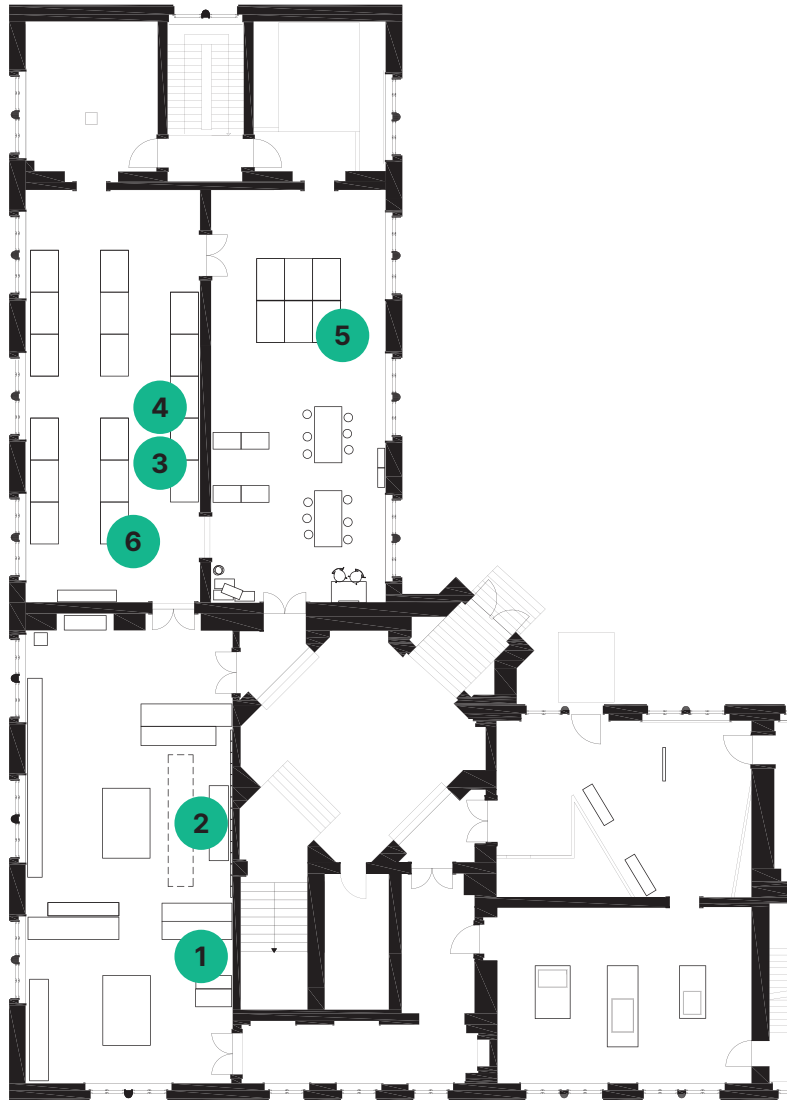


Discover the exhibition

Wild Wonderful World

On the trail of the past

People have always been curious about the past. Many Danes have collected and studied the past through time. In the exhibition you can find examples of some of the findings that have made us aware of prehistoric life on our planet.



Exhibition floor plan

DENMARK
NATURAL HISTORY
MUSEUM

UNIVERSITY OF
COPENHAGEN

1

A forgotten treasure

In the 1950s, a very well-preserved tooth whorl from the prehistoric shark, *Helicoprion*, was discovered in Idaho, USA. It was sent to Copenhagen to be further studied by the Danish expert in prehistoric fish, Svend Erik Bendix-Almgreen, in 1961. He discovered that it was a new species and named it *Helicoprion ergassaminon*. It was then forgotten in the museum collections for many years until 2023, when it was returned to the Natural History Museum in Idaho.

2

The researchers' eyes in the field

Much knowledge about life and the earth origins from countless volunteers' and collectors' curiosity and ability to discover new findings in nature. The amber collection of Karin Nordmann Ernst is no exception. The amber was collected over 40 years and provides scientists and researchers with a view into the past of the earth from 35-40 million years ago. The well-preserved insects and plant fragments contribute to a new understanding about the life and environment of the past.

3

The start of the scientific revolution

The fossilized bird's head was found by the German amateur geologist Karsten Witteck in 1996 on Fur, Denmark. In 2007, a young Danish paleontologist, Jakob Vinther, examined the fossil with an electron scanning microscope. This method revealed that there was well preserved coloured pigment in the fossil's feathers and eyes! This discovery revolutionized paleontology. The new method made it possible to apply the correct colours on other fossils and prehistoric animals found around the world.

4

Egg-sotic discovery

It was Danish George Olsen who made the first scientific discovery of fossilized dinosaur eggs. He moved with his family to New York, where he became a paleontologist with The Natural History Museum. He participated in the American expedition to the Gobi Desert in 1923 where he discovered the eggs. There had previously been discovered eggs in India and France, but without knowledge of their origin. It was with George Olsens discovery that it was established, that dinosaurs laid eggs.

5

Tooth- and headache

P. V. Lund was a zoologist and botanist from the University of Copenhagen. In 1833 he moved from Denmark to Brazil, where he explored stalactite caves and excavated several fossils from prehistoric animals. He found a large canine tooth which he argued came from a bear, whereas some molar teeth came from hyenas. However, several more discoveries of some lower jaws made him aware, that what he had discovered probably came from a huge prehistoric cat. P. V. Lund was therefore the first to describe the iconic sabertoothed cat *Smilodon populator*.

6

A very dear dodo

The museum has a very special skull in the collections: a skull from a dodo, an extinct bird from Mauritius. The skull entered the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in 1751, when the German palace Gottorp was conquered by Denmark after the Great Northern War. Only very few museums around the world have a complete dodo skull, and back when the first Zoological Museum in Copenhagen was established in mid-19th century, a copy was made for display because of the skull's great value. The original skull has recently been 3D scanned and is the basis of the head of a new dodo model, that is the latest scientific interpretation of a dodo.