

## **Press Release: Evolution exhibition opens at KU Natural History Museum November 1.**

Explore Evolution, a new multimedia exhibition, will open at the University of Kansas Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center in Dyche Hall on November 1. The exhibition gives visitors the opportunity to understand and experience how scientists conduct research on evolution.

Current scientific research and major discoveries by internationally recognized scientists are featured. Seven areas, from cells to whales, explore and illustrate evolutionary principles and show how knowledge of evolution is fundamental to advances in contemporary science and medicine.

Leonard Krishtalka, director of the museum and research center, said, "The University of Kansas Natural History Museum is extremely pleased to be one of six museums that is showcasing Explore Evolution. Biological evolution unifies our understanding of life on Earth, its dramatic history over more than 3 billion years, its fantastic diversity across continents and oceans, and its unity from DNA to the ecological systems that sustain the life of our planet. Explore Evolution represents the very best in our discovery of knowledge through scientific research. It provides our students and the public with the very best science education."

Research topics presented in the exhibition are:

- the rapidly evolving HIV virus that causes AIDS and the need to understand it to find a cure.
- the most complete fossil record of the evolution of a new species of single-cell diatom recently recovered beneath Yellowstone Lake.
- leaf-cutter ants farming their fungus crops and an investigation of the partnership between four co-evolved organisms that aid the farmer ants to grow their crops.
- how sexual selection has shaped the evolution of flies in Hawaii
- a study of finches in the Galapagos Islands that shows how changes in the size and shape of the birds' beaks result directly from changes in the food supply.
- a comparison of chimp and human DNA, indicating genetic similarities and differences.
- fossil evidence discovered in a desert in Pakistan linking whales to their four-legged ancestors.

The Explore Evolution exhibition demonstrates how evolution works with state-of-the-art technology, graphics, and interactive modules. Bruce Scherting, director of exhibits, said this exhibition offers visitors several hands-on exhibit elements to observe specimens and computer interactive components that allow visitors to select activities, video, and additional information about the research topics.

4-H organizations in five states have developed study programs in conjunction with the exhibition, and a book, "Virus and the Whale: Exploring Evolution in Creatures Small and Large" includes inquiry-based activities for middle-school children. Lectures and public educational programs will be announced during the course of the exhibition.

The exhibition has been developed by six natural history and science partner museums at the University of Kansas, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, the University of Nebraska, the University of Oklahoma and the University of Texas. The Explore Evolution project, headed by Judy Diamond, of the U of N State Museum, is funded by a \$2.8 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

The Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center is open 9-5 Mondays through Saturdays and noon to 5 Sundays. See [www.nhm.ku.edu](http://www.nhm.ku.edu) for further information about the museum; see [www.explore-evolution.unl.edu](http://www.explore-evolution.unl.edu) for more about the exhibition.

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