

**SOUTH CAROLINA STATE MUSEUM  
PRE-VISIT MATERIALS  
FOR THE MUSEUM TOUR:**

**NATURAL HISTORY TOUR**

**TO THE TEACHER:**

Our Planet Earth has been around for hundreds of millions of years, but it has not always been, as we know it now. Both the physical characteristics of the land and of the life forms have undergone a slow but constant change.

The pre-visit materials consist of: terms and definitions; synopsis of the natural history exhibits.

The docent-taught Natural History Tour is designed to briefly introduce young students to some of the natural history exhibits. If there are exhibits of particular interest, please speak with the docents before the tour begins. They will make every effort to fulfill your requests.

**GOALS:**

To introduce young students to some of the many different kinds of animals that have lived in South Carolina over millions of years.

To help students develop an appreciation and understanding of the state's fragile environment and why it is important to protect it.

## **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

1. Blue Ridge - Mountains found in the northwestern part of South Carolina.
2. Piedmont - Central part of South Carolina with gently rolling hills and valleys.
3. Coastal Plain - Lowland of South Carolina made of swamps, marshes, and barrier islands.
4. core - Earth's center.
5. crust - Thin outside layer of the Earth.
6. mantle - Melted rock beneath the Earth's crust.
7. erosion - Wearing away of rock and soil by wind, water or ice.
8. earthquake - Violent movements in the Earth's crust.
9. faults - Breaks or cracks in the Earth's crust.
10. fossils - Any evidence or trace of animals and plants that lived in the past.
11. habitat - Place where an animal or plant lives.
12. adaptation - Special qualities of a living thing that help it survive in its surroundings.

## **NATIONAL HISTORY EXHIBITS**

### **A SUMMARY**

#### **\*GIANT WHITE SHARK MODEL AND JAWS**

A 43-foot life-size shark model and an 8-foot tall representation of a Giant White Shark's jaws.

#### **\*MAP OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Interactive map shows major cities, physiographic areas and river systems. It illustrates various sea levels from 100 million years ago to the location of South Carolina's current coastline. The exhibit also shows the basic geology of the state in a side panel.

#### **\*DYNAMIC EARTH**

A series of exhibits illustrating the formation of the planet, plate tectonics, rock formation and the type of rocks found in the state, and the cause and effect of earthquakes.

#### **\*LIFE IN THE PAST**

A great variety of animals have inhabited South Carolina over millions of years. We know about them from recovered fossils. Learn about the different types of fossils and how fossils are formed. Through replicas of a limestone quarry and a Pee Dee riverbank, students can see and learn how paleontologists find and interpret evidence of ancient life forms.

#### **\*PLEISTOCENE (THE ICE AGE)**

Around 1.8 million years ago, during the Pleistocene Epoch, about 30 percent of the Earth's surface was covered by sheets of ice up to two miles thick. While South Carolina was not covered by ice, the climate was cooler and the flora and fauna were far different from what is seen today. Through life size models and fossil remains, students can learn about extinct animals, such as the mastodon, glyptodont, and giant beaver.

## **\*PRODUCERS**

Producers (plants) are at the base of the food chain. This exhibit illustrates the various parts of a plant, and the function of each as the organism makes, transports and stores its food. Some native plants take unique approaches to these functions as seen in “Different Slants for Different Plants.”

## **\*CONSUMERS**

Animals, unlike plants, cannot capture the sun’s energy and make their own food. Animals are consumers. Find out how the food chain, food web and food pyramid help to keep nature in balance and the differences between carnivores, omnivores, and herbivores.

## **\*TEETH AND BEAKS**

The shape of a mammal’s tooth shows its function. Beaks are used to gather food, defense, nest-building, and grooming.

## **\*SOUTH CAROLINA HABITATS**

Visit and learn about some South Carolina habitats. As you do, see some of the animals and plants, which make their homes in present day conditions of a Beach and Salt marsh, a Barrier island, a Mountain cove, the Piedmont, Sandhills, River botton (Swamp) forest and a backyard environment. Here, the inhabitants are all strongly dependent on each other and on their environments.

(\*Indicates a major exhibit)