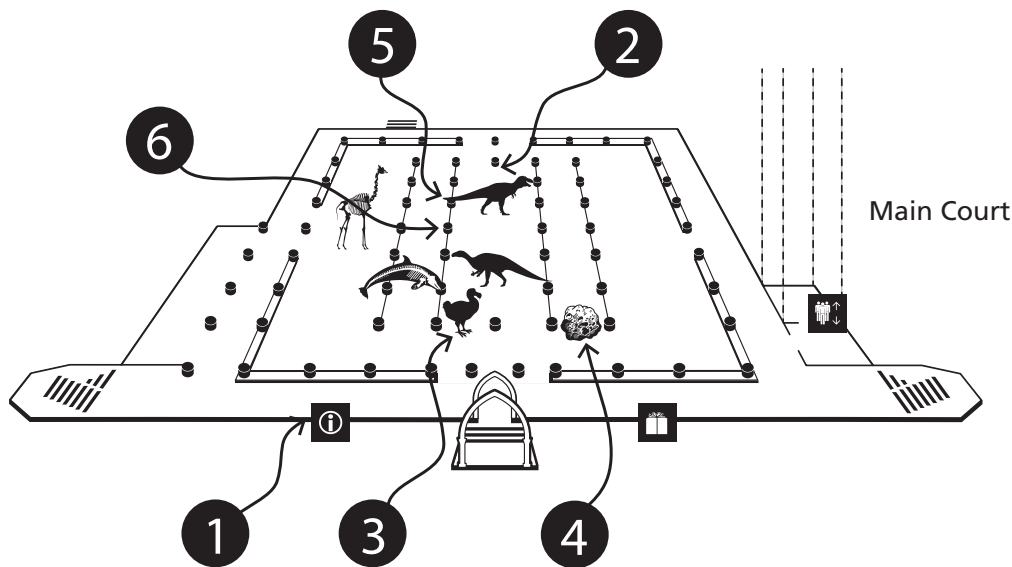


# Is It Real...?



Museum of  
Natural  
History

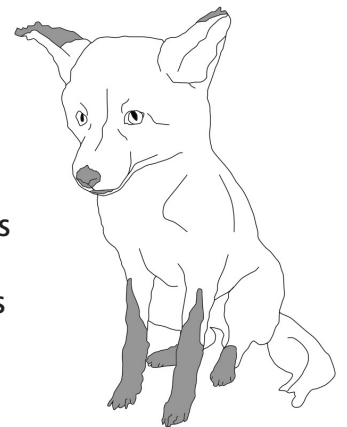


## 1 Taxidermy

Start off at the Welcome Desk where you will meet a friendly fox. Stroke its long bushy tail, also called a 'brush'. Did you know that a fox's tail is about 1/3 of its total length! Red foxes use their long tails as a way to communicate with other foxes, waving them around to send different messages.

**Is it real?** Yes, this fox was once alive. When the animal died its insides were taken out, including its bones. These have been replaced with materials less likely to rot away, such as foam or wood wool; we call this taxidermy. The eyes are also taken out as they would rot too.

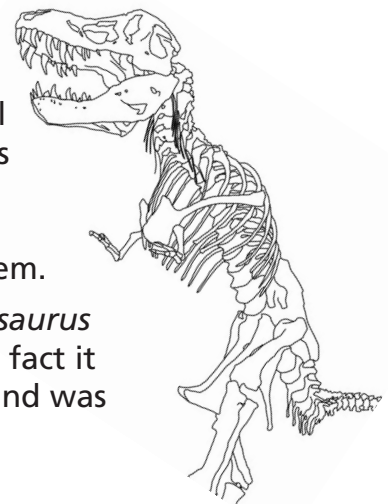
**Feel the eyes, what do you think they are made from?**



## 2 Fossils

The Museum has many fossils, and one of the most popular fossils is the *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. This *T rex*'s name is Stan, named after the person who found him 30 years ago. When fossils are dug up from the ground they don't always have all the pieces of the skeleton, some are missing. Stan is the second most complete *T rex* skeleton ever found.

**Is it real?** No, this *T rex* is in fact a cast (copy/model). The reason for this is that when a fossil is discovered it usually stays in the country where it was found. Stan was found in America so that's where the real fossil is. Also fossils are very rare and we don't want to damage them as there is only one Stan! Can you spot the metal poles in the legs? These help to show how the *T rex* would have stood when it was alive. We couldn't attach poles to the real fossilised bones as it would damage them.

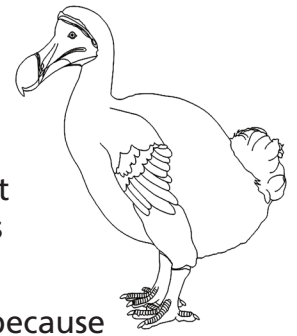


If you want to see a real fossil go to the *Megalosaurus* case to your left. This jaw is the real deal, and in fact it was the first ever thing to be called a dinosaur and was found in Oxfordshire!

**Who was the person that found it?**

### 3 The Dodo

The Dodo is most famous for becoming extinct. It lived on the island of Mauritius, near Africa. When people from Europe landed on Mauritius in 1598 they caught Dodos to eat, but they didn't taste very nice. It is likely that the dodo became extinct because the dogs, cats and pigs that the Europeans brought with them destroyed the Dodo's eggs and habitat.



**Is it real?** No, the dodo that you see on display is actually a model. This is because no one has ever found the remains of a whole dodo since it became extinct 350 years ago. In fact this Museum is the only place to have the mummified head and the foot of a dodo which is all that was left of this unlucky creature.

### 4 Rocks & Minerals



In this aisle you will find a selection of rocks and minerals that you can touch. Have a go at feeling them. **Which one do you like the feel of the most?** \_\_\_\_\_

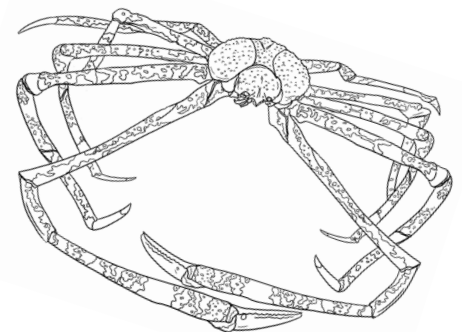
**Is it real?** Yes, these rocks and minerals are the real thing. You might not have thought so because you are allowed to touch them. The meteorite had been flying through space for over 4 billion years before it landed in China during the reign of Henry VIII (600 years ago). **One of these touchable minerals is also known as 'fool's gold', which one do you think it might be?** \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 Spider Crab

The Japanese Spider Crab is the largest species of crab in the world. This one has been on display in the Museum since it opened almost 160 years ago! Their long legs are weak, and about three-quarters of Spider Crabs alive today are missing at least one limb.

**How many legs does this crab have?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Is it real?** Yes, the spider crab is real, however, its beautiful red colour is not! The colour had faded from being in the sunlight for so long. It was painted a few years ago to make the crab look like how it would have when it was alive. Did you know that the Museum found that one of the legs was partly made from rolled up newspaper!



### 6 Spirit Jars

Find the Amphibians case. Some things in the Museum are kept in jars of liquid to stop them from rotting, this is called preserving. The liquid that they are kept in is called 'ethanol' which is a really strong type of alcohol (we sometimes call these liquids 'spirits'- but not the ghost type!)

**Is it real?** Yes, the frog in this jar is the real thing. Unlike the taxidermy where the insides were taken out, the insides of this frog are all still there. **Why do you think that scientists might find the spirit jar frog more useful than a taxidermy frog?** \_\_\_\_\_

