



## The Bones in the Basement

By Jennifer Kuchta, '02 BA March 2, 2011



A cast of the massive Dunkleosteus skull watches over the entrance of the Paleontology Museum.

In the basement of the Earth Sciences Building at the University of Alberta, don't be surprised to find a massive beady eye monitoring your every move: the skull of a Dunkleosteus, a super predator that dominated the Devonian seas 360 million years ago, commands you to enter a gem on campus, the Paleontology Museum.<sup>bo</sup>

Paleontological collecting was started at the University of Alberta in 1912 by John A. Allan. The Paleontology Museum was established in 1935, and was moved to its current location in the Earth Sciences Building in 1958.

The museum exhibits just a fraction of the thousands of fossils in the paleontology collections on campus, used extensively for research and teaching. The museum is a joint venture between the Departments of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and Biological Sciences and is accessed daily by university classes, school groups from kindergarten to post-secondary, as well as the general public.

In contrast to exhibitions in most paleontology museums, the majority of specimens here are real; however, some casts are used, and some specimens are "interpreted" to provide the viewer with a more complete rendering. Fossils provide evidence of life more than 10,000 years ago, and in fact, the oldest specimen in the museum is a "stromatolite" more than 2.6 billion years old.

Highlights in the museum include specimens collected by the famed "dinosaur hunter" George F. Sternberg, a composite hadrosaur skeleton (the largest specimen in the museum), a Precambrian/Ediacaran exhibit, a "touchable table," and of course the enormous Dunkleosteus skull.

URL: <http://www.newtrail.ualberta.ca/FeatureStories/FeatureStories%20Current/PaleontologyMuseum.aspx>