The Cole Museum of Zoology

The whole animal kingdom under one roof

Fun & learning for kids

Do you know what kind of animal a ‘Unicorn horn’ belongs to?

Do you dare look at the large hairy spider?

Can you work out which bones and skulls belong to which mammals?

The Cole Museum of Zoology is full of excitement and learning for children of all ages. Have a go at a fun questionnaire or ask to handle some real bones, a marine turtle shell or big cat skin.

New displays and specific materials have been created to support the National Curriculum and we run outreach days for year 12 students (see the website for details). The Museum is popular with local primary and secondary schools who are welcome to bring classes that are either self-taught or led by university staff – booking is essential.

Come and spend some time with us – we are sure you will want to return!

How to find us

By car
The Cole Museum of Zoology is situated in the AMS building (building 30) of the School of Biological Sciences on the Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading and can also be accessed through building 53. From the M4 (J11) follow the signs for the University. From central Reading follow signs for the A327 to Aldershot. The main entrance is on the A327 (Shinfield Road). Enter the campus along Queen's Drive, pass through the Sports Grounds, take the first left then turn left at the mini roundabout. There are two car parks on the left-hand side of the road.

By public transport
Reading station is approximately 30 minutes from London Paddington.

From the station, the number 9 stops at the Shinfield Road entrance and numbers 19, 20 and 21 stop on campus (see red dots on map). Bicycle racks are provided in front of buildings 30 and 53.

The Cole Museum

For more information, please contact:

The Cole Museum
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Tel (0118) 378 5393/4428
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Admission
Free with an option to donate.

All group visits of more than 8 people must be booked in advance.

Disabled access
There are parking bays for disabled drivers at the rear of the AMS building (turn immediately right at the mini roundabout), a ramp at the entrance to the museum and disabled toilets on the ground floor.
What to see …

With hundreds of specimens of great zoological significance, the Cole Museum of Zoology demonstrates the rich diversity of the Animal Kingdom. The Museum begins with the simplest of life forms and ends with the most intelligent, the Primates.

Start your tour by learning about the invertebrates, animals without backbones. Wonderful examples of corals, jellyfish, deep sea sponges, squids and snails are on show for you to see. Next, move on to admire the beautiful collection of butterflies from around the world. Find out about sharks and rays and how humans are related to fish. The reptile display will tell you about our links to the age of dinosaurs and how birds have evolved over millions of years. See if you can find the dinosaur egg. The end of your tour will bring you to perhaps the most familiar area of the Animal Kingdom- the mammals. Take the mammal diversity trail and be amazed to discover how mammals are so varied in appearance and lifestyle.

History of the collection

Francis Joseph Cole was appointed to ‘University College Reading’ in 1906 and was soon promoted to the position of Professor of Zoology. A passionate and creative collector of animal specimens he soon set to work on a museum collection using a variety of imaginative means. He encouraged donations from overseas visitors and even asked students to bring back exciting finds from their research projects and holidays all over the world.

In 1939 the prestigious journal *Nature* recognised the collection as ‘being without a rival’ among its contemporaries of the day. Nowadays, somewhat rarely, the Cole collection remains intact, retaining its status as one of the most important and complete UK museums of comparative anatomy–the study of differences between animals.

Professor Cole was not only an enthusiastic gatherer of animal specimens, he also had a fondness for medical and zoological books. Complementing the Museum is the Cole Library of first editions and rare volumes of books and scientific papers, covering the history of early medicine and zoology from earliest times to the present day. Today the function of the Cole Museum is still to support the teaching of Zoology to undergraduate students.