

NEW FOSSILS ROCK THE RBCM

Paleoscientists the world over are sharpening their pencils at the prospect of digging into the newest collection of fossils at the Royal BC Museum (RBCM). Mostly ammonites (a group of extinct molluscs) but also including land plants, bivalves, crabs and even a few shark teeth, the specimens have been donated by a British Columbia collector who chooses to remain anonymous. The fossils form an extensive representation of life in the waters off Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands 70 - 85 million years ago.

But we're not just talking about a few rocks here. Begun in 1974, this world-class collection includes some 20,000 fossils. Just about as fast as museum staff can catalogue the material, researchers are itching to get to work on it. "This collection couldn't be duplicated again," says Dr. Richard Hebda, RBCM curator of botany and earth history. "It contains the very best examples of ancient Cretaceous life." The collection will provide decades' worth of research for scientists.

The acquisition is made even more valuable to the RBCM by the donor's attention to detail in his field notes. His consistent use of labels and specifics on fossil locations has helped streamline the cataloguing process.

During the past few months, museum staff and volunteers – two of whom are experts from the Victoria Palaeontology Society – have worked tirelessly to pack, transport and track the fossils to their new home at the RBCM. The collection comprises several tons of rock in total, some pieces as heavy as a grown adult – and every gram of it packed out by the collector on his own two feet.

Through thick fog, across slippery streams and up steep cliffs – and even, on one memorable occasion, swimming between two islands with his fossil hammer in his mouth – this expert amateur collected millions of years of history. "The large number of specimens makes it possible to obtain a comprehensive understanding and description of sea life at that time," says Hebda. "Eventually we'll be able to paint a picture of life off the coast of southern British Columbia during this time."

RBCM ACQUIRES NEW CORRECTIONS COLLECTION

The Royal BC Museum (RBCM) recently acquired a collection that brings the story of the BC justice system full circle. Rigorously catalogued and elegantly organized, the BC Corrections Collection – extensive enough to fill a 4.5-tonne truck – documents the lives and experiences of those who work and live in the correctional system. Riveting artifacts shed light on life inside the walls – inmate-created art, improvised weapons, correctional facility contraband and items related to controversial issues such as Canada's 1950s-era debate about the death penalty. The collection complements – and completes – the RBCM's existing collections on the BC police force, BC Supreme Court judges and lawyers. "Now we have a spectacular collection that speaks to the whole process of law and justice in BC," says curator Lorne Hammond.



Richard Hebda shows off just one of the 20,000 fossils recently donated to the Royal BC Museum (top). One of the collection specimens is pictured above.

ROYAL BC MUSEUM SECURITY OFFICER PLACES FIRST IN MUSTANG SHOW

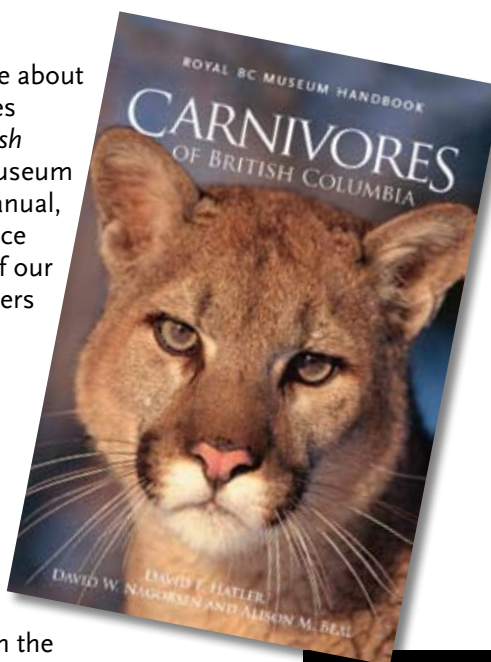
Leave it to an unassuming 40-something commissionaire (with degrees in art and theatre, no less) to flatten the competition in the Mustang Club of America's Grand National Judged Show in Utah this past summer. "When I got the car in 2004, the guy at the local Toyota dealership said I should look into joining the Vancouver Island Mustangs," Debbie Price recalls. "I'd never been into cars before." Well ... that was then, and this is now. Fat stripes run the car's length, stylized flames flank the wheel wells and horses race across the doors. Not to mention eagles etched in the glass, a stallion's head carved onto the tailpipe, and mountains painted on the interior doors – all courtesy of First Nations artist Dale Delorme. With multiple wins at the wheel of her green pony car, Price has succumbed to the fever of modding her ride. "It's very addictive."



Royal BC Museum
Commissionaire Debbie Price
with her award-winning car.

Updates

- The Royal BC Museum (RBCM) showcases one of humankind's greatest engineering feats in its upcoming exhibit *Treasures: The World's Cultures from the British Museum*. From China comes a ceramic model of the watchtowers erected along the length of the Great Wall during the Han dynasty (AD 1-200). From these towers, sentinels dispatched smoke and flag signals to warn of possible invasion by non-Chinese peoples. *Treasures: The World's Cultures from the British Museum* opens at the RBCM on May 1, 2009.
- Satisfy your craving to know more about BC meat eaters. The RBCM invites you to tear into *Carnivores of British Columbia* (\$27.95 at the Royal Museum Shop). In this illustration-rich manual, BC writers and biologists introduce readers to the lore – and lure – of our sleek co-competitors. From badgers to wolverines, and everything in between, this is a thorough and fascinating reference manual.
- Break out the vocals on Sunday, Dec. 7 from 4:30 - 5 p.m. at the annual *Carol-Along with the Carillon* at the RBCM. At 5 p.m., the Netherlands Centennial Carillon brightens up the corner of Government and Belleville with the first-ever *Carillon Light-Up*. Get ye into the spirit of the season!



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