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AMERICA'S OLDEST NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM KICKS OFF COUNTDOWN TO YEARLONG BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Countdown begins Saturday with the first of 200 stories

PHILADELPHIA (August 31, 2011) – The Academy of Natural Sciences, the nation's oldest natural history museum, this week kicks off a 200-day countdown to a yearlong bicentennial celebration with a fascinating peek at its past and a look ahead to its third century.

The yearlong celebration beginning March 21, 2012 will feature a major new exhibition, a national scientific symposium, special programs with noted speakers, public engagement activities, discounted museum admission days, and a new coffee-table book on the Academy's history.

The countdown to the big day begins Saturday, Sept. 3, when the Academy posts the first of 200 fascinating short stories on its website at www.ansp.org/200. The stories—some well-known but most little-known—will reveal fascinating tidbits about the institution, its history, its key leaders and its enormous contributions to scientific knowledge. The stories will culminate the day before the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Academy. Then the real celebration begins.

"We can't wait to share our exciting stories—past, present and future—with everyone," said Academy President and CEO George W. Gephart, Jr. "This is an exciting time in the Academy's history as we charge forward into our third century as one of the world's great natural history museums."

On March 21, 1812, seven amateur naturalists founded the Academy of Natural Sciences, the oldest natural history museum in the Americas. Since then, the Academy has carried out its mission to encourage and cultivate the sciences, exploring the remarkable diversity of the natural world and sharing these discoveries with the public through innovative exhibits, publications and educational programming. In May, the Academy announced plans to affiliate with Drexel University, creating a nationally recognized powerhouse for discovery in the natural and environmental sciences.

Here are some of the special activities to look forward to in 2012:

- The Academy at 200: The Nature of Discovery, March 24 to March 2013. Building on the Academy's extraordinary collections and 200 years of scientific exploration, this major exhibit celebrates the museum's groundbreaking discoveries and provides a glimpse into the future of one of the world's great natural history museums. Visitors will "journey" alongside Academy scientists in search of new species, see rarely displayed Academy treasures, and explore how people impact the environment.
- **Bicentennial Weekend, March 24 and 25.** The bicentennial year officially begins with the opening of a yearlong exhibit about the Academy, plus special appearances, fun hands-on activities, music, games, crafts, and, of course, birthday cake.
- SCVNGR Trek in March. A special bicentennial trek using smart phone technology will launch.
- Center for Environmental Policy Town Square Series, April 2012 through June 2013. The
 Academy will host panel discussions and presentations by globally prominent speakers on critical issues
 of sustainability and the environment.
- Academy Travels Afield, May through November 2012. A six-month exhibit at Philadelphia
 International Airport (between Terminals C and D, ticketed passengers) will highlight the global research
 of Academy scientists and the Academy's collection of 17 million animal and plant specimens.
- **Bicentennial Scientific Symposium, October 11 and 12.** Scientists from around the nation will gather to discuss "Biological Diversity: From Evolutionary Origins to Ecosystem Functionality." The symposium will have a component for the general public as well.
- Cuisine from the Collections in October. Noted area chefs will prepare a fun and funky dinner featuring a menu based on the wide range of species in Academy collections including birds, insects and shellfish.
- Women in Natural Sciences 30th Anniversary in November. A celebration will mark the 30th anniversary of WINS, the Academy's highly successful competitive science-education, life-skills mentoring program for Philadelphia public high school girls.
- **Bicentennial Gala March 2013.** The celebration comes to a close with a black-tie party celebrating the Academy's future while honoring the significance of its past.

More information and ongoing updates will be available starting Sept. 3 at www.ansp.org/200.

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Founded in 1812, the Academy of Natural Sciences is America's oldest natural history museum and a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. For nearly 200 years, the Academy has carried out its mission to encourage and cultivate the sciences, exploring the remarkable diversity of our natural world and sharing these discoveries with the public through innovative exhibits, publications, and educational programming.

HOURS: Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Saturday–Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. ADMISSION: \$12 adults; \$10 children 3-12, seniors, college students, military personnel; free for members and children under 3. \$2 fee for "Butterflies!" PHONE: 215-299-1000