



*A Dawnosaurs visitor enjoying the hands-on science in the NHM's Investigate centre*

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# Dawnosaurs 2021/22

An impact report prepared for the  
Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

September 2022

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*A Dawnosaurs visitor getting involved in the programmes activities*

## Introduction: Dawnosaurs in 2021/22

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We are delighted to present this report on the Dawnosaurs programme to Lady Wolfson and to the representatives and Trustees of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation. This report will outline the impact of the Foundation's final instalment of £30,000 made in 2021, fulfilling the total donation of £90,000 towards supporting this programme pledged in 2017.

Over the years, the Natural History Museum and the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation have accomplished a great deal together through its continued partnership. Having supported Dawnosaurs from its beginnings in 2015, the Foundation has helped enable the programme to evolve into the established and much-loved programme that it is today.

The Dawnosaurs team have continually developed learning activities tailored to meet the specific needs of not only the autistic children but also their accompanying families and carers. Throughout the series of events coordinated, the children's confidence to enjoy and engage with the collections and the natural world has been at the heart of the programme and all we do.

Your support over this past year has been particularly important during a period of step change. This has included restarting the on-site iteration of Dawnosaurs following the lifting of social distancing restrictions in addition to the departure of long-time project lead, Ronel Verwoerd.

We hope you enjoy reading about what the programme has achieved this past year and its plans for the year ahead.



*Dawnosaurs visitors engage with drawing activities in the NHM's Hintze Hall*

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# Dawnosaurs 2021 - 2022

## News and updates

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### Dawnosaurs back onsite



*Above: Two of our Dawnosaurs visitors standing underneath Hope, the skeletal specimen of a Blue Whale suspended from the ceiling of Hintze Hall at the South Kensington site.*

In November 2021, the Museum was delighted to host its first on-site Dawnosaurs event since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Unforeseeably, in March 2020, the UK went into national lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus. Not since the Second World War had the Museum experienced such a protracted period of closure. All onsite public engagement was immediately suspended, including the Dawnosaurs programme of events. In response, we worked quickly to develop new ways of reaching our audience through a range of innovative mediums including delivering online activities and resources to our neurodivergent audiences.

Once government restrictions lifted and our learning team was confident we were equipped and able to provide a safe environment, we welcomed our Dawnosaurs audiences back to our South Kensington site on the 21st November 2021 for a morning of scientific discovery and engaging activities.

Activity programming								
Event Date	Ranger Stu	Scientist	Hands-on	Art	Music	Outdoors activities	Theme	(Mobiloo)
South Kensington								
21-Nov-21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes*	No	General	N

The following itinerary was shared ahead of the event to ensure parents and carers were able to plan their visit to best suit their child's interests and needs.

	Gallery & location	Activity	Time
<b>Red Zone</b>	<b>Earth Hall</b> Ground floor	Learn more about rocks, minerals and crystals.	Drop-in sessions: 8.00 – 9.45
	<b>Flett Theatre</b> First floor	Meet Ranger Stu and his animals.	Timed sessions: 8.30 9.00 9.30
<b>Green Zone</b>	<b>Investigate</b> Basement	Come along and play African drums with Donald.	Timed sessions: 9.00 9.30 10.00 10.30
	<b>Hintze Hall</b> Ground floor	Draw your favourite specimen with the help of our artists.	Drop-in sessions: 8.00 – 9.45
<b>Blue Zone</b>	<b>Marine Invertebrates</b> Ground floor	Meet our scientists Adrian and Alex and find out how microscopes work.	Drop-in sessions: 8.00 – 9.45



*Above: a Dawnosaurus visitor getting hands-on with a seashell specimen.*

## Activities offered

All activities have been run before apart from the Drumming workshop, which was piloted as a new addition to the offer (details of activities run can be found in previous annual reports).

### Drumming workshop

We trialled a drumming workshop during the most recent Dawnosaurs event. Donald Gamble from Primary Workshops for Schools brought along 30 drums and led 4 x 25minute sessions for our families. The benefits of drumming for autistic children are well-known: drumming improves dexterity and rhythm, helps improve concentration, and enhances communication with peers. The children loved the ‘talking drums’ where the facilitator played a simple rhythm which they echoed or responded to. Several non-verbal children communicated with their peers in this way, playing a rhythm and getting a response from the group. The sessions were informal with some structure that Donald adjusted where needed. He shortened the storytelling aspect in order to maintain the visitors’ interest. We made available 12 ear defenders which were used constantly (and wiped properly between users). We ran four sessions with altogether 100 participants and approximately 130 attending adults.



*One of our Dawnosaur visitors participating in the drumming workshop*

Feedback from audience and participants was great:

***‘This was so much fun.’***

***‘I didn’t expect G. to like it but he was making the most noise!’***

***‘I know what someone is getting for Christmas...’.***

***‘The workshop leader was great with the kids – so much patience!’***

## 16-25 content

As part of our broader work in supporting neurodiverse young people, Dr Alex Ball, Head of Imaging and Analysis, and his PhD student supported the event by running an activity aimed at older visitors (16-25) that sought to explore microscopy, scale and magnification using unique tactile models to help the participants interpret the microscopical world that surrounds us. He brought along a stereo light microscope and connected screen, magnifying glasses and materials for examination using either the microscope or the magnifying glasses. He also provided 3D printed models of microscopic objects and scale models of coins to act as "anchor points" to provide context for different magnifications.



*Learning how to examine specimens using a microscope*

## Feedback from the onsite event

Feedback from Harris Bokhari, Trustee of the Natural History Museum after attending the Dawnosaurs event on the 21st November:

***Dear Ronel***

***I hope you have had some rest. Amazing event - really top class - something you, your team and the Museum should be really proud about.***

***I spoke to our staff/volunteers and several parents - this is something which is a life saver for so many of the families that attend - really great stuff.***

***Your team were all great and you have some amazing people working with you.***

***Overall - really proud of this event and so happy I made it at 6.50am!***

***Please pass on my congrats to the whole team and I will be telling the trustees about it next week when we meet and please do invite me to the next neuro-diversity training session as I would love to learn and see our training in action as well.***

***thanks again and have a great evening!***

## Autism Awareness training session with Dr Jamie Galpin, The Bridge

We ran an Autism Awareness training session (webinar) in January 2022, attended by 37 people. Anybody who wanted to enhance their understanding of neurodiversity and specifically autism was invited; there were staff from various departments, Kickstarters, PhD students, contractors and Agency staff. From feedback following the session a mix of attendees agreed that the training was perfect for their purposes and understanding autism more broadly, and some sharing that they'd like some more advice and guidance on practically implementing the content into day-to-day responsibilities. We have debriefed with HR about this and will take this feedback into our future training plans.



*Dawnosaurs participant interacting with sensory lights*

## Dawnosaurs promotional video

[A promotional video](#) was produced to increase public awareness of what the Dawnosaurs programme has to offer.



*A still taken from the Dawnosaurs promotional video that depicts Ranger Stu showing the audience a live northern white faced owl at the most recent Dawnosaurs event in November 2021*



## Tring's SENDsational mornings

Part of the Dawnosaurs Coordinator's time during this period was spent supporting the bookings administration for Tring's SENDsational mornings, supporting the move from a manual bookings approach to the Museum's booking system, Galaxy. The following mornings were run:

**06/02/2022 - 62 children and 61 adults**

**29/05/2022 - 62 children and 67 adults**

At our most recent event at the end of May we asked a few people for some verbal feedback as the morning progressed. Here are some highlights:



*Photograph taken from Tring's SENDsational morning*

**"Really nice calm atmosphere"**

**"It was really great and we will definitely come to the next one"**

**"The sensory room was excellent"**

**"I really enjoyed all the lights and the light up eggs"**

**"What a great event, how often do you do them?"**

**"Honestly, for us, it really makes a difference"**

**"We get to see more than we would on a busier day"**

**"Great to have access to things like the dressing up box with no crowds around them"**

**"Sensory room is a godsend when the children need to decompress between galleries"**

## Future plans and direction

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We have just finished recruiting for a Programme Developer to replace Ronel Verwoerd who left her role earlier this year. This new candidate is due to begin their role at the start of October 2022. Once in post, they will continue to drive the programme forwards and build on our offer. In addition to Dawnosaurs, the main focus for the new Programme Developer will be to explore programming for neurodiverse young adults and to support the integration of SEND programmes into our schools offer. The new Programme Developer will sit within our programming and operations team to ensure better integration within our public programme. Through our new community team, we've been doing some work with local groups in the triborough, and are receiving consistent feedback on the lack of provision for neurodiverse young people, particularly those aged 15-25. Part of the role's responsibilities going forwards will be to scope the programme offered to this audience, as well as to scope other ways to grow the Dawnosaurs event and associated resources.

With the Urban Nature Project underway, this provides additional opportunities for the role to develop new activities that can take place in the gardens, Learning Activity Centre and Insect Amphitheatre as part of the early morning opening events. For example, this could include holding themed 'pick and choose' activity stations in the new gardens, including microscope activities and make and takes.



Thank you for your support

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On behalf of the learning team and everyone at the Natural History Museum, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation.

With the help of the foundation this unique programme has continued to bring joy and wonder to countless children and young people with neurodiverse conditions over the years and we are proud to have witnessed Dawnosaurs go from strength to strength.

Thank you.



*Drawing of a stick insect made by one of the Dawnosaurs participants at one of our art themed activities*



*A Dawnosaurus visitor matching shell specimens to the corresponding foam shapes.*

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**Contact:**

**Antonia Seroff**

**Philanthropy Executive, Trusts and Foundations**

**[antonia.seroff@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:antonia.seroff@nhm.ac.uk)**