



Natural
History
Museum

DAWNOSAURS

A Report Prepared for

The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

SEPTEMBER 2023



We are delighted to present this report to Lady Wolfson and the Trustees of The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation and provide an insight into the progress and impact of the Dawnosaurs events programme over the past year.

Dawnosaurs events have been further enhanced this year with the addition of new themes, activities and initiatives to provide a special and enriching experience, tailored specifically for the enjoyment and needs of neurodiverse children and their families and carers.

We hope you enjoy reading this overview of the accomplishments of this important programme made possible by your generous support.

THANK YOU

Dawnosaurs Team Update

Following the departure of Ronel Verwoerd (former Dawnosaurs lead), the Museum appointed Johnathan Leighton as Learning Producer: Access and Neurodiversity to lead the design and delivery of the Dawnosaurs programme.

Johnathan is providing valuable insights into the development of the Dawnosaurs programme, drawing on his experience of being autistic himself, and from working as an access and neurodiversity consultant to a range of theatre organisations and educational establishments.

Dawnosaurus: Event Attendance 2023

Month	Dawnosaurus Participants
January	1,154
May	1,035
September	1,534

We are delighted to report we have welcomed 3,723 visitors so far in 2023.

The next events will be taking place in November and December (the latter which has been rearranged from earlier in the year).

Reaching Our Audiences

The Dawnosaurus team utilised mailing lists, social media marketing and community outreach initiatives to reach new audiences. Although the majority of our subscribers are London based, we continue to have many subscribers from across the UK and we are pleased to see growing international interest, including subscribers from Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Austria and the United States.

Dawnosaurus Activities: Updates and Themes

All programming is aligned with the Museum's learning policy, whilst retaining the high element of fun Dawnosaurus is known for.

We trialled designing individual events from May onwards around a theme related to the natural world, including 'Giants and Birds' and 'Dinosaurs'. Spotlighting different topics has brought a point of focus for the design of new activities and gives visitors the opportunity to plan trips based on a child's particular interest and for visits to remain fresh to repeat attendees.

Following the trial, events in the Dawnosaurus programme will be themed over two sessions rather than one, allowing the team to hone the design of new activities and providing sufficient time to plan future theme-based activities. We hope these changes will make more of our in-depth programming developed in-house and lessen the amount of budget allocated to external contractors.

January Activities

- Meet the Scientist
- Animal Encounters with Zoolab UK
- Drawing in Hintze Hall
- African Drum Workshop
- Skulls Trolley

May Theme: Giant and Birds

- Birds of Prey Workshop
- Exhibition entry to Titanosaur: Life as the Biggest Dinosaur
- Birds Story Time with craft activities
- Animal Presentation with Ranger Stu
- Meet the Scientist
- Skulls Trolley

September Theme: Dinosaurs

- Dino Show
- Exhibition entry to Titanosaur: Life as the Biggest Dinosaur
- Meet The Scientist
- Dinosaur Arts and Crafts activity
- Rove specimens

BIRDS OF PREY

This exciting activity was a hit, enabling children to see and get close to live birds of prey. The event was delivered alongside 'Workshops for Children', an organisation specialising in interactive activities for primary aged children. As the cost of engaging external contractors is high, the team are exploring new ways of delivering activities with a high impact moment using in-house resources.

TITANOSAUR:

LIFE AS THE BIGGEST DINOSAUR

Dawnosaurs has historically been delivered in the Museum's 'free' public spaces. This provided an exciting opportunity for participants to visit a blockbuster exhibition.

This is a fantastic new offer to experience the exhibition with adjustments made with neurodiverse audiences in mind, including modifications to lighting and sound effects. The exhibition was exceptionally popular, resulting in positive feedback and visual signs of enjoyment amongst visitors. We will continue to open paid exhibition spaces at future Dawnosaurs events.

DINO SHOW

Presented by one of our educators in the Attenborough Studio, this show explored Dinosaur themes in a fun and accessible format. Specimens were used to bring the show to life and children were encouraged to engage.

Forming part of our schools' programme, the team was keen to see if the show would resonate with our Dawnosaurs audience. The show was popular with participants, but the studio proved difficult to locate, given its distance from other activities. We are considering more accessible locations for future events including in the new gardens being redeveloped as part of the Urban Nature Project (due to open in Spring 2024).

Audience Feedback

We are always delighted to receive feedback from our audiences and hear about aspects of the programme they enjoyed, what the programme means to them and what we could do to make this special event better for them. Below is a selection of feedback emailed by parents and carers of some of our Dawnosaurs participants.

"Thank you for a fantastic Dawnosaurs event! ...It felt so relaxed and welcoming, and the kids settled right into the excitement and wonders around them, without getting overwhelmed! They saw everything they had hoped, and we as carers got to enjoy the museum too!"

"This was our first SEN event and absolutely loved it. Being able to enjoy a day out without judgement from people or being stared at if one of the children is having a meltdown or stimming was absolutely amazing...Thank you SO much for putting on these events, it really meant the world to a mum and dad of 3 SEN children."

"We have two autistic children and they enjoyed themselves immensely. They had an amazing time at the Titanosaur exhibition and loved the interactive displays, because they are very visual and kinaesthetic learners, so the hands-on activities made such a lot of sense to them. ...Thank you again for all your hard work in making this event a very enjoyable and memorable experience for us."

"Our son is 5 and our daughter is 3 . They have been diagnosed as ASD with a PDA profile and have sensory processing disorders. This event was the best day out that we have had as a family and I promise that is no exaggeration. We were so well informed about what to expect before the event and the staff who were working during those two hours were amazing with our children. Our children could not have had a better time, and our little boy is desperate to come back.

My husband finds it difficult taking the children out in public because he feels that we are judged as a family and the children are scrutinised by observers. This is the first time that we have been to an event with families who have children with additional needs. My husband loved it because no one batted an eyelid and for a short time he said 'it felt like we were just an ordinary family'.

I am a teacher and know how much organisation is involved in arranging school trips so I cannot begin to imagine the amount of work involved in putting on this event, but I promise that everyone's hard work was worth it to see the smiles on my families faces."



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With returning visitors, new faces and delighted responses for every event, Dawnosaurus offers neurodiverse children an exciting and enjoyable experience tailored with their needs at the forefront. As champions of the Dawnosaurus programme from its beginning, The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation's continued generosity has enabled the programme to evolve into the valued and established event series it is today.

A fundamental part of programme is to give young neurodivergent people the opportunity to interact with science and the natural world in an environment suited to them, fostering growth in themselves and future opportunities. Many scientists and nature advocates speak about how the Museum inspired a formative desire to learn about the natural world. Your support has enabled us to inspire a generation of children who may not have otherwise had that door open to them.

THANK YOU

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*Above Image: Press image of guests enjoying
Titanosaur: Life as the Biggest Dinosaur
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