

# Form and Function



## Skeletons tell stories

<b>KLAs:</b> Science	<b>LESSON TOPIC:</b> Animals from the inside and out
<b>YEAR LEVEL:</b> K-10	<b>DURATION OF ACTIVITY:</b> 45-50 minutes

Animals have two very different sides to them: the outside that we see when we observe them in nature, and the inside; which usually is not seen. However, in a museum, both of these sides to animals can be observed next to each other. We can explore the relationships between the outer appearance, and ecology of animals, and their skeleton using specimens in our Natural History Museum.

This activity uncovers these relationships in two key ways using the museum specimens:

- Attentive observation of key features of skeletons: Consider, discuss, and explore whole and sections of skeletons to uncover how they work, and what they can tell us about the ecology and appearance of the animal;
- Creative reconstruction of species through pencil illustration. Examine the skeleton of an animal, making inferences about what the animal looked like, where it lived, and what it ate, and draw what you think the live animal looked like.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- appreciate the importance of museum collections as a scientific resource, why we collect skeletons and taxidermy skins, and what they can tell us
- develop knowledge and understanding of relationships between the appearance and ecology of a live animal, and its skeleton

- understand how different animals can have very similar structures, reflecting for similar life modes
- develop skills in scientific illustration, through free-hand pencil drawing, and critical thinking in the reconstruction process

### EXPLORATORY AND PLAY-BASED COMPONENTS

This activity combines scientific enquiry with natural science and observation. Children will have an opportunity to inspect skeletons and match them to the whole animals they belong to. They will examine parts of the skeleton to infer possible modes of life for the animal, such as what they eat and how they move. Then they will go out into the museum, and do their own reconstructions of skeletons, and understand that often skeletons look nothing like the animals they belong to! This will allow them to use the museum in a play-based exploration of the natural world, comparing and contrasting organisms with and without skin.