LIZARDS & SNAKES: ALIVE! Opening October 16, 2010
Exhibition Showcases Over 60 Live Lizards and Snakes From Around the World

*Lizards & Snakes: Alive!,* an engaging exhibition that features more than 60 live lizards and snakes from five continents, opens at the San Diego Natural History Museum on October 16, 2010. On view through April 3, 2011, the exhibition introduces visitors to a diversity of squamates—the group that includes legged and legless lizards, including snakes. *Lizards & Snakes* showcases live animals and their remarkable adaptations, including projectile tongues, deadly venom, amazing camouflage, and sometimes surprising modes of locomotion. The exhibition is included with general admission to the Museum. Tickets for nonmembers range from $10–16 with discounts for children, students, military, seniors, and groups.

“The exhibition teaches us about the vast diversity of lizards and snakes on the planet—including living representatives, from delicate geckos to ferocious-looking venomous snakes,” says Bradford D. Hollingsworth, Ph.D., Department of Herpetology Curator and a major collaborator on the *Lizards & Snakes* exhibition. “Lizards and snakes make up an amazing success story in the animal kingdom. They are no more prehistoric than modern mammals are from their ancestors. It is also a great start to understanding the rich biodiversity of lizards and snakes in our own backyard, as San Diego is home to 14 of their taxonomic families.”

One case in the exhibition includes four species of geckos: Madagascan Giant Day Geckos, Common Leaf-tailed Geckos, Lined Leaf-tailed Geckos, and Henkel’s Leaf-tailed Geckos. There is also a web camera mounted on the Water Monitor case, enabling virtual visitors around the globe to observe the daily life and behavior of one of the largest living species of lizard on Earth.

*Lizards & Snakes: Alive!* features a broad array of squamates, including a Burmese Python, Water Monitor, Rhinoceros Iguana, and Veiled Chameleon; Eastern Water Dragons, geckos, Blue-tongued Skinks, Gila Monsters, Emerald and Amazonian Tree Boas, and Campbell’s Milk Snakes. Representing 26 species occurring in countries such as Australia, Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Sudan, and the United States, the specimens range from a four-inch Tropical Girdled Lizard to a fourteen-foot Burmese Python and are shown in re-created habitats complete with ponds, tree limbs, rock ledges, and live plants.

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“Our fascination with lizards and snakes starts early and endures throughout life,” said Dr. Michael Hager, President and CEO of the San Diego Natural History Museum. “Lizards & Snakes: Alive! is a great family exhibition where curiosity about nature is nourished. Teaching careful observation and learning about fascinating strategies for survival are key ingredients in the development of careers in science. As one of the largest repositories of reptile collections on the west coast, it is appropriate for us to partner with the American Museum of Natural History on this exhibition.”

Lizards & Snakes also offers numerous interactive stations throughout the exhibition inviting visitors to listen to recorded squamate sounds, get a close-up look at live geckos, test their knowledge about squamates, explore the inner workings of a rattlesnake on the hunt, and view videos of lizards and snakes. An activity center for children, located at the end of the exhibition, featuring hands-on exhibits and activities—from matching lizards to their habitats to assembling squamate skeletons—will include touchable skin casts, puzzles, question-and-answer sliders, games, and more.

Lizards & Snakes will feature a variety of fossil specimens and fossil casts. Among the highlights is a fossil cast of Megalania, the largest-known terrestrial squamate, which attained lengths up to 9.5 meters (30 feet). This ancient relative of today’s Monitor Lizards lived in Australia during the Pleistocene (from 1.6 million to 40,000 years ago).

Lizards and Snakes: Alive! is funded by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors at the recommendations of Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price, Supervisor Ron Roberts, and Supervisor Greg Cox. Additional financial support provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture. Lizards & Snakes: Alive! is organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York (www.amnh.org), in collaboration with San Diego Natural History Museum and the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, Atlanta, with appreciation to Clyde Peeling’s Reptiland.

The San Diego Natural History Museum is the second oldest scientific institution in California; third west of the Mississippi. A binational museum, its mission is to interpret the natural world through research, education, and exhibits; to promote understanding of the evolution and diversity of southern California and the peninsula of Baja California and to inspire in all a respect for nature and the environment. Located in Balboa Park at the intersection of Village Place and Park Blvd., the Museum is open daily except for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Phone: 619.232.3821. Website: www.sdnhm.org.

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