

Darwin's collections 'cocooned' at London museum

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A museum employee looks over the "Cocoon" at the Darwin Centre at The Natural History Museum in London. The new 78 million pound (129 million dollar) centre is a scientific research and collections facility that can be used by over 200 scientists at a time.

London's Natural History Museum on Tuesday unveiled an eight-storey extension in the shape of a cocoon to house the collections of Charles Darwin.

The new ultra-modern white addition to the imposing Victorian [museum](#) includes the Darwin Centre, a state-of-the-art research and exhibition facility named after the father of the theory of evolution.

The 78 million pound (89 million euro, 129 million dollar) building houses 17 million insect specimens and three million plant specimens as

well as a Climate Change Wall of screens showing the impact of global warming.

Sharon Ament, director of public engagement at the museum, said the Darwin Centre "will really show our visitors why and how our scientists tackle some of the most pressing issues we face today -- from the spread of disease to the impact of climate change on the planet's wildlife."

The museum's director, Michael Dixon, said he hoped the extension would boost the 3.8 million visitors it already attracts every year, when it opens to the public on September 15.

"There seems to be a public appetite for being more involved and knowing more about the big environmental issues of the day," he said.

Darwin's seminal 1859 work "On the Origin of Species" set out his [theory of evolution](#), by which species develop from generation to generation by a process of natural selection.

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