What does “palaeontology” mean?
Palaeontology is the science or study of life on Earth before there were written records, as studied by fossils. The name comes from the Latin *palaeo* meaning “old” or “ancient,” *onto* meaning “relatedness,” and *ology* meaning the “study of.”

When did the Royal BC Museum start collecting fossils?
Our earliest collections are from 1872 and were collected by George M. Dawson, and in the 1890s by Charles F. Newcombe.

How big is the fossil collection?
Our fossil collection, with approximately 60,000 specimens, ranges from delicate impressions from the Palaeozoic Burgess Shale (nearly 600 million years old) to mammoth and mastodon bones and teeth of the last 20,000 years.

Where do you keep all of the collections?
You need a lot of room to keep big collections of big objects. We have about 130 cabinets and 19 large open racks for the biggest specimens. We are opening a new collections and research building in Colwood called PARC Campus and we will have even more room for our growing collection.

What do palaeontologists collect?
Palaeontologists collect a huge variety of fossils. Fossils range from giant dinosaurs to tiny pollen grains; the collection includes 50-million-year-old plant and insect fossils from the Kamloops area, and molluscs and vertebrate remains from 25 million years ago found at Sooke on Vancouver Island. Bird bones from Hornby Island, bison bones from Victoria, and samples of lake, bog and stratigraphic sections from the last ice ages (Pleistocene Epoch) are also preserved.

Who works in palaeontology collections?
All museum collections have a variety of people who work in them. Typically, there is at least one curator and one collection manager. A curator’s job is to decide what is important to keep in the collection and what specimens to accept into the collection. Every museum collection has a goal: at the Royal BC Museum, our goal is to tell the story of ancient life in British Columbia throughout space and time. A collection manager’s job is to take care of the collection by keeping each specimen well preserved and facilitating how specimens come in and out of the collection. Many other people visit the collection such as scientists, researchers, volunteers and community members.