



## Press release Baby Animals

For a long time The Museum of Natural Sciences wanted to have an exhibition for the smallest visitors. **Baby animals** is the first in its kind: an interactive exhibition for children aged 3-8 years.

The theme of the exhibition is based on **four principles**:

- The topic is tailor-made: children can identify themselves with *I was born and learn to be independent*.
- The children's curiosity is roused – *let them make mistakes and learn from it*.
- The exhibition is designed for non-literates: *let's experiment with my body*.
- The subject is tailored to children's tastes and skills – *seen and approved by children from 3 to 8 years of age*.

**A topic for the smallest ones with which they can identify: *I was born and learn to be independent***

Who doesn't melt at the sight of a new-born elephant, a downy chicken or a baby zebra?

The exhibition plunges you and your children or pupils into the **exciting world of baby animals, from their birth to the moment they can fend for themselves**.

Who takes care of the little ones? What do baby animals eat? How do they learn to run, swim or fly? Discover the cartoons, animation and video clips about growing up, facing danger, living and surviving. But above all, *Baby Animals* is a do-it-yourself exhibition with numerous activities tailored to children: crawl like a toad with eggs on your back, look for the softest nest and make funny faces. Learn a lot about yourself being young...

An exhibition for families and children, tailored to children aged 3-8.  
Older children, parents, grandparents and teachers are welcome as well!

Let the children practice and experiment while playing and imitating. And give the time to learn with pleasure how young animals find their way and grow up. It's all about experimenting!

Games, games, games... But also 30 cartoons, interactive pursuits and animation clips. Take it all in: 75 animals are central to the exhibition, not real animals from a zoo but from the collection of the museums of natural sciences in Toulouse (33 animals) and Brussels (27 animals). The result is a diverse choice of mammals, fish, birds and insects. Some animals have especially been selected and stuffed in dynamic positions (15 animals). An attractive collection, tailored to children... an experience that will not fail to move you. Tender, emotional, surprising... Those are the key-words.

**Tailored to their tastes and skills: *seen and approved by children***

When devising the exhibition we went to schools to let the children experiment the forms, colors, animals, games, stories and multimedia. Obviously, children feel at ease with cute baby animals, but they also appreciate baby or adult animals that are not the prettiest or which behave in an unfriendly way. It's all about fascination ... for, for instance, a large crocodile trying to pull a baby elephant into the water, foxes capturing a birdie, a mother hamster eating her babies. It's not just about cute animals: a young peregrine falcon or a naked gorilla baby are not the prettiest animals...

*Baby Animals has been developed in 4 languages (Dutch, French, English, German).  
A coproduction of the Museum of Natural Sciences (Brussels) and the Muséum of Natural History (Toulouse).*

### **Extras**

If you would like to take a tour with your family, you can get the **WWF notebook for free** at the box office. With your children you follow 5 animals in the exhibition (1 per continent), their threats and the actions set up by the WWF to protect them. You can also take part in a competition and win nice prizes by completing a form. In French or Dutch.

After your visit you can **pursue the fun at home**. The exhibition has produced a set of 12 cartoons and accompanying booklet 'Baby Animals – tell me a story', to be read to children. In the museum shop you can also buy a coloring book, T-shirts for children, cups and puzzles.

Or you can **download the song** 'Grown up so fast' which the Belgian group 'Les déménageurs/Lili en haar familie' has written especially for the exhibition. You will probably sing this for days on end! (In French and Dutch). [www.naturalsciences.be](http://www.naturalsciences.be)

## **Practical information**

### **Museum of Natural Sciences**

29 Rue Vautier/Vautierstraat – 1000 Brussels

24 hour information: Tel. 02 627 42 38

[info@naturalsciences.be](mailto:info@naturalsciences.be) - [www.naturalsciences.be](http://www.naturalsciences.be)

### **Some advice for the little ones:**

leave the large buggies at home and bring a small, foldable buggy or a sling,  
or leave your large buggy on level -2 before entering the expo.

### **Opening hours**

Tuesday to Friday: 9.30 am to 5.00 pm

Saturday, Sunday, and Belgian school holidays (Tuesday to Sunday): 10.00 am to 6.00 pm

Closed every Monday, 24 December, 25 December, 31 December, 1 January and 1 May

### **Access**

Our car park is small, so we recommend using public transport.

Metro: Lines 1 and 5, station "Maelbeek/Maalbeek" (exit Chaussée d'Etterbeek/Etterbeeksesteenweg/), or Lines 2 and 6, station "Trône/Troon"

Train: station Brussels-Luxemburg

Bus: 34 and 80, stop "Museum" or 38 and 95, stop "Luxemburg" or "Idalie"

You can purchase a B-daytrip (train plus museum entry) in every train or metro station: no. 510 for individual visitors

### **Admission fees (for Baby Animals and the permanent collections)**

#### **Individual visitors:**

€ 7.50: adults

€ 6.50: students, senior citizens, Friends of the Institute, disabled persons

€ 5.50: children aged 6-17

free: subscribers with a year's pass to the permanent exhibitions

**Groups** (from 15 people) – advance booking compulsory for groups or picnic area: Tel. 02 627 42 52  
€ 6.50 adults

€ 5 young people aged 2-25

Visit and picnic area: advance booking compulsory: Tel. 02 627 42 52

**School groups:**

Workshops complete a free visit and guided tour of the exhibition – for information and bookings, call Tel. 02 627 42 52

**Free:** First Wednesday of every month from 1.00 pm (no bookings allowed)

Children < 6 years old in family groups

ICOM ; Teachers, when presenting a teacher's card ; Companions of disabled persons

**Dino Café**

For a snack and a drink, or for something more substantial, take a break in the Dino Café.

**Dinoshop**

The museum shop has souvenirs for everyone (including films, books, cuddly toys, T-shirts, and gadgets).  
Opening hours are the same as for the museum.

Taking photos or filming for personal use is permitted, as long as it does not disturb the other visitors. Taking photos or filming for professional purposes is allowed only with permission from the press service (Yannick Siebens, Tel: 02 627 43 77. This number is for the press only – please do not publish it.)
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## The exposition Baby Animals in 6 zones

**Baby Animals** has been especially designed for children aged 3-8 years and displays 75 baby animals, 30 cartoons, movie clips\*, multimedia applications and creative, educative activities... which illustrate different aspects of the course of life: birth, the exposure to threats and protection, learning experiences, vital functions, growth and development and, finally, independence.

**You are face to face with 75 baby animals that are displayed on stage.** Can you see whether they already have some fur or are they still covered in down? Are they very different from their parents or resembling small adults? Are they on their legs or are they entirely helpless? The animals are exhibited at children's height, protected by a low glass wall or small displays. They are not meant to be stroked because the collection is too precious and delicate.

*The exposition radiates a young modern look, with a lot to see and to do. There are also calm spots with cozy banks for parents and children.*

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\* movie clips

- movies with real images about birth and independence (fledging, standing on your own legs/paws, swimming away, instinct,...)

- cartoons with animated images, which may be supported by a narrative voice (4 languages), while others are speechless. Some cartoons have 3 alternative endings: a happy end, a sad ending (which is often the real one) and a funny or purely imaginary ending...

### 1. Birth

*Who emerges from the egg? Which animals give birth under water? Who is alone with his parents and who comes into the world surrounded by sisters and brothers?*

Movie with real images about the birth of fish, birds, mammals, insects,...

Activities: crawl like a toad with eggs on your back, choose or make a cozy nest in which you feel good, do a digital card game to decide which babies come from the egg and which come out of the belly.

Cartoons about the birth of baby animals: pandas, frogs, tigers, duck, sea horses and human babies. Are these born alone or with brothers and sisters? The dolphin is born under water, tail first, while a turtle is born from an egg and then makes his way to the sea.

### 2. Threats and protection

*Some animals are well protected by the herd, the parents, the community. Others are facing dangers from the moment they are born. And sometimes they are on their own...*

Activities: throw a baby kangaroo in mummy's pouch, put on a cape and cover up against dangers like the ice bear and the antelope...

Cartoons: are little foxes, hamsters, sea horses and deer cold or hungry? Which animals have to cover up to avoid being eaten by others? The cuckoo lays his egg in a foreigner's nest and has adoption parents raise his child. In that way the baby cuckoo can grow and fledge...

Do father and mother animals protect their offspring? The penguin is protected by both parents and small bats are cared for by several mothers in a kind of nursery (*see the scientific article below*).

Film with 3 possible scenarios for the baby turtle that crawls from the egg and looks for the water without his parents' help. He is eaten by a sea-gull on the road (reality), he arrives at the water just in time (happy ending) or he returns, gets a helmet and pickaxe, and digs himself a tunnel towards the sea (funny ending).

### 3. Learning

*Animals learn as they play by imitating their parents or by instinct.*

Activities: test your balance, imitate the other animals and make funny faces... which you and the other visitors can admire on a large screen in the hall.

Cartoons: initially, the small gorilla learns, mostly from his mother, how to eat leaves or insects, how to sleep alone, look after himself and defend himself. Young lions learn to hunt by playing: they fight, bite, chase one another and train their suppleness, speed and reflexes.

### 4. Vital functions

*Eating, learning to walk, flying, swimming, recognizing smells, feeling your brothers and sisters and warming yourself by their company... baby animals need all of this to survive.*

Activities: follow the smell to connect mother and baby animals, stroke their fur, down or the naked skin.

Little swans share a nest with 4 to 7 brothers and sisters. They can quickly eat or swim by themselves. But they need each other's and their mother's warmth to sleep. They literally nestle under their mother's wings.

Film with 3 possible scenarios: all little swans crawl under their mother's wings (happy ending), one swan makes a grand move towards independence (funny ending) or one baby swan cannot find her mother and dies of the cold (sad but possible ending).

### 5. Development

*Baby animals grow and develop in similar ways. Sometimes they grow fast, sometimes slow. Do they go through a real metamorphosis or are they tiny adults from birth onwards?*

Activity: connect the baby animal to the right adult in a card game

## **6. Autonomy**

*Baby animals walk, swim, fly, eat and defend themselves... on their own. They have become independent.*

Activity: turn a handle and watch how many days, weeks and years it takes baby animals (and humans) to fend for themselves.

Cartoons: some baby animals need years to be independent; others are independent from birth. The grass snake has to fend for itself immediately after birth, just like an adult. He does not have any parents to feed or defend him. The baby koala needs more time to be independent. When he leaves his mother's belly, he does not yet have fur and is not bigger than a sweet. He hides safely in a pouch on his mother's belly and after 9 months, hanging on his mother's back, he is ready to discover the world. Human babies stay with their parents for a long time. At birth they are completely helpless; then they gradually learn to sit, crawl and walk. They can keep growing until they are 18 years old. And then it's time to let go...

The exposition ends with a musical movie about fledging, swimming away, leaving the nest and standing on your own legs.