

A national minerals collection includes catalogued specimens of gemstones and minerals. The museum also has specimens of rocks and ores from many regions of the world and extra-terrestrial specimens such as meteorites.

The vertebrate fossils collection includes many rare dinosaur fossils. Palaeontological activities have focused on the dinosaurs of the Cretaceous period in Alberta, the Pleistocene fauna of Saskatchewan and the unglaciated region of Yukon. The new science of palynology, the study of fossil pollen and spores, is proving effective in determining climatic conditions of the past, and contributes information to other areas of research such as hay fever and honey grading. The paleobiology division has a collection of slides of fossil fungi, and reference and exchange collections of fossil pollen.

An interpretation and extension division presents public lectures and films, activity workshops and interpretive lessons for teachers and students. It also provides a school loans service and develops educational resource materials and travelling and temporary exhibitions.

There are five permanent natural history exhibit halls in the Victoria Memorial Museum Building. One on the earth presents an explanation of the continental drift theory and illustrates the natural forces that have physically shaped the world. One on life through the ages shows how some of the plants and animals have adapted to changing circumstances through geologic times while others became extinct; this hall's dinosaur court features fossils poised amid the sub-tropical vegetation typical of Western Canada 75 million years ago. A hall of birds has many life-like dioramas showing the kinds of birds typical to nine of the major biological regions of Canada. Another has dioramas on mammals in Canada showing migration and defence against predators. A hall on animal life traces animal evolution through a 500 million-year period to the present, including the story of man's efforts to unravel the evolutionary threads that relate all of the world's animals to each other. An exhibit hall displays temporary and travelling exhibitions from the museum and elsewhere. Two more major halls on plant life and animals in nature are in preparation.

### 17.3.5 National Museum of Science and Technology

Most recently formed of the four national museums, the National Museum of Science and Technology opened in 1967. It has pioneered many new techniques. Participation and a sense of nearness to objects from steam locomotives to axes are features.

Exhibit pavilions contain examples from the history of ground transportation from sleighs to aviation and space. Trains have figured prominently both as acquisitions and in programs. Steam train excursions, operated in collaboration with the National Capital Commission, are popular summer events. There are also experiments and skill-trying tests in the physics hall and exhibits on the history of agriculture, marine transport, meteorology, time pieces and astronomy.

In the aeronautical collection at Rockcliffe Airport over 90 aircraft illustrate the progress of aviation and the importance of the flying machine in the development of Canada. Included is one of the world's largest collections of aircraft engines.

Tour guides conduct educational programs on topics for all age groups. The museum's observatory houses Canada's largest refracting telescope, used for evening educational programs. The museum's 16,500-volume branch library emphasizes a retrospective collection of Canadian aviation.

### 17.3.6 National programs

Four national programs provide services to the Canadian museum community.

The Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) has as its main objectives: conservation of Canada's heritage collections, training in the methods of conservation, and research leading to the development of improved conservation techniques. The CCI treats works from institutions of all sizes and gives equal attention to objects of recognized national or local cultural value. Requests for treatment are channelled through regional advisory committees. The CCI's services are also available to institutions in the event of emergencies such as fire or flooding. The CCI launched its first mobile conservation laboratory in the Atlantic region in 1979.