

The Jurassic Coast Collection

By Chris Reedman, The Jurassic Coast Trust - chris.reedman@jurassiccoast.org

1. Introduction

The Jurassic Coast was recognised for inscription as a World Heritage Site for its unique collection of globally important geological and palaeontological sites, many of which have contributed to our fundamental understanding of the earth sciences.

Whilst the importance of the Site's palaeontology is well established in published scientific literature, demonstrating its role within World Heritage presents certain challenges.

2. What are the challenges facing palaeontology on the WHS?

- More could be done to improve access to important fossils from the Jurassic Coast.
- Better emphasis on their unique role in the story of the World Heritage Site.
- Improved mobilisation of stored specimens to connect with local communities.
- Improved access to specimens held in private collections.

3. What is the aim of the Jurassic Coast Collection?

To identify a globally important collection of fossils which explicitly demonstrate the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

4. Assessing significance

- Key palaeontological interests outlined in the GCR Review Series and in the Nomination Document for World Heritage Status.
- Key historically and scientifically important fossil sites.

4.1. Assessing the resource

Key Scientifically Important Fossils

- New species or specimens likely to represent new species.
- Rare fossils such as dinosaurs, complete insects, etc.

Scientifically Important Fossils

- Stratigraphic or scientific collections.
- Geologically comparable inland material.

Culturally Important Fossils

- Fossils with significant visual or emotional impact.
- Cultural and historical items associated with local fossil collecting.

5. Aspirations of the Jurassic Coast Collection

- To provide a new and important evidence base to energise research and scientific study along the World Heritage Site.
- To help identify priority areas for specimen acquisition.
- Promote further investment and support for the creation of new facilities that expand the collective capacity to conserve and curate the Site's incredible fossil heritage.
- Encourage public interest in and recognition of an excellent network of local museums and visitor centres.

6. Opportunities for fossil collectors

- Demonstrate how collectors contribute to the conservation and management of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.
- Establish the scientific and educational value of specimens.
- Promote ambitious local exhibitions of Jurassic Coast fossils.
- Foster new relationships and opportunities for collaboration.
- Encourage support and investment for the development of local museums and visitor centres within the 'string of pearls' concept.
- Help address the uncertainties surrounding the development of a new facility dedicated to Jurassic Coast fossils.

7. Opportunities for museums

- To use the Jurassic Coast Collection to develop their own projects, pursue funding, and identify opportunities to collaborate with other JCC partners.
- Help identify and support priority areas for specimen acquisition.
- Promote further investment and support for ongoing conservation and curation.
- Identify and categorise the strengths of existing museum palaeontological collections, and how they support World Heritage.
- To participate in a dispersed collection to elevate individual collections as part of the wider context.
- Engage with a wider public audience through digital channels, thus improving global access to important fossils.
- Develop research projects with a number of collaborating academic institutes that will potentially lead to further scientific study.
- Identify priority specimens for acquisition and areas of under representation, refine and focus acquisition policies.
- Create opportunities for joint programming.
- Potential to attract new volunteers with skills specific to curation and preservation of collections.
- Visibility for stored or otherwise non-accessible collections.
- Potential for new and exciting temporary exhibits.

A glimpse of the Jurassic Coast Collection

A diverse collection of Lower Jurassic insect fossils

- 380 specimens
- Exceptional preservation e.g. eyes and mouth parts
- Many likely new species
- Significant research potential
- A glimpse of the terrestrial ecosystem.



© James Carroll



A large *Temnodontosaurus* skull

- Important exhibition in Lyme Regis Museum
- Clear connection with the local community
- Sense of pride for the geological heritage of the area
- A nucleus for collaboration

© Lyme Regis Museum, photograph by Moonfleet Photography

8. What's next?

- Recognise and support priority acquisitions.
- A series of exhibitions to celebrate 20 years since inscription as a World Heritage Site.
- Opportunities for major palaeontological research initiatives, particularly any that support the OUV of the Site.
- Continued registration of fossils from the GCR Review Series, particularly within national and international museums.
- Expansion of the categories to other palaeontological interests.
- Review of the geographical collecting bias and of collection bias to identify fossil groups or localities where more collecting effort is desirable.
- Development of an online platform to showcase development of the Jurassic Coast Collection.
- Early scoping work for long-term security