



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Ryan Barber
(276) 666-8659

Virginia Museum of Natural History Prepares Specimens For New Facility

Renowned taxidermist leads team to restore museum animal mounts.

MARTINSVILLE, Va. (July 25, 2006) – In an effort to restore some of the most intriguing animal specimens available, the Virginia Museum of Natural History drew on the expertise of an outstanding team led by renowned taxidermist, Paul Rhymer. The refurbished animal mounts will be displayed in the new, world-class museum's "How Nature Works: Life" exhibit in time for the museum's grand opening in March 2007.

Working four rigorous, twelve hour days paid off as the team fully restored six large specimens. Among the six were a moose, tiger, black bear, leopard, mountain goat, and axis deer.

"Paul and his team did a marvelous job," said Dr. Nancy Moncrief, curator of mammalogy. "I can't wait to see these animals displayed in the new exhibit. I know that visitors will be astonished by how life-like these animals are."

The procedure was anything but ordinary. From coloring the damaged fur of a sun-bleached tiger with Nice n' Easy hair dye, to cleaning the dirt and grime from each animal with Pert shampoo, Rhymer's team used innovative ways to rejuvenate the animals.

The team made many other repairs using more usual means. Sewing and stitching cracks and tears in the hides, repairing claws and eyes, as well as re-posturing the animals took a large amount of time and patience.

Rhymer, along with team member Walter Sorrell, restored many of the specimens now displayed in the Smithsonian's Kenneth E. Behring Hall of Mammals. According to Rhymer, the two years he and others spent working on the mammal hall equate to the biggest accomplishment of his career. Over 250 animals were restored in what Rhymer said was by far his largest project to date.

"The Virginia Museum of Natural History is extremely fortunate to have someone of Paul's caliber restoring these animals," Moncrief said. "His team's efforts will help make our new 'Life' exhibit one of the most spectacular in the country."

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville seeks to increase understanding of and appreciation for the natural history of the Commonwealth through education, research, collections, publications and exhibits. The museum – an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution – is accredited by the American Association of Museums, a distinction earned by fewer than 10 percent of museums in the United States. A new, \$28 million museum currently is being built in Martinsville. When fully completed in early 2007, the new museum will offer five times the exhibit and public space of the current facility.

The museum is a member of the Association of Science-Technology Centers, Virginia Association of Museums, Heritage Preservation, and an agency of the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia. With 22 million objects in its collection, it reaches nearly 1 million people annually through on-site and traveling exhibitions, classroom outreach programs, the museum's Web site, public events and publications.

The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. Members are always admitted free. Admission is \$5 for adults; \$4 for senior citizens and youth 12-18; \$3 for children 3 to 11; and free for children 2 and under. For more information about membership or volunteer opportunities, please call 276-666-8600 or visit the museum's Web site at www.vmnh.net.

###