

Do you find the animals in the case shaped they way they are?

Where do you find the animals?

Where is the male ruddy duck?

All three of the above questions arrived at the same time, so I am presuming they came for the same group (special thanks to Brian, Daniel and Julia (all age 8) for coming to the parks, being outside and enjoying nature) and I will answer them all at once.

The animals in our display cases have all been preserved using a method called taxidermy; an animal that has died either from natural causes or something else, would have all its insides removed and the skin preserved. The skin, along with any feathers, scales or other coverings, would then be placed over a model of the animal and posed in a position that the taxidermist found to be attractive, interesting or educational in some way. There are many very elaborate displays of taxidermied animals in natural history museums all over the world (the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C. has an entire taxidermied elephant in the lobby!).

The origins of our specimens (who gave them to us and where they were found) are lost in the long ago mists of time. Many of them were donated to the city of Palo Alto more than 20 years ago. It is likely that some died of natural causes and some from other things like altercations with cars; some may even have been killed by scientists wishing to preserve them for others to look at.

The male Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) was borrowed by the Junior Museum for a display a little over 10 years ago. It will almost certainly live there for some time more.