



Berkshiremuseum

In the Dark

In the Dark is a traveling exhibit designed by the Cincinnati Museum Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. It will be at the **Berkshire Museum from January 21 - May 21, 2006.**

Exhibit Overview

In the Dark explores dark areas of the natural world that may be unfamiliar to visitors, such as caves, underground habitats, forests at night, and the deep sea. Through dioramas and interactive experiences, visitors learn about the organisms that live in these dark habitats, how they function in the dark, and how some dark environments are related to one another. The exhibit also explores human interactions with darkness, including the development of technological tools for exploring the dark.

The dark is a place of mystery for most people. Perhaps scary, but at the same time intriguing. Darkness is also a natural evolutionary selective pressure that has caused organisms to adapt in diverse dark ecosystems. ***In the Dark*** makes the unseen less intimidating through visual, physical, and other interactive experiences.

Exhibit Contents

The Darkness of Night

A cluster of dioramas depicting three nocturnal ecosystems:

Great Smoky Mountain Forest

Sonoran Desert

Louisiana Cypress Swamp

The 100 sq. ft. diorama of the forest is the largest in this section and features barred owls, spotted skunks, salamanders, bobcats and more.

Interactives

- Identify nocturnal and diurnal species in desert and swamp habitats.
- Use flashing light patterns to identify firefly species.
- Match frog photos with the sounds they make.
- Hunt for prey like a viper, using your heat-sensing capabilities, in an electronic game.
- Learn methods used by birds to navigate at night (stars and magnetic field).
- Discover which mammals are active at night and during the day.
- How do owls locate prey? Find out by viewing a mounted owl and skull.

Darkness Within the Soil

A diorama depicting a cross-section of the soil in a typical Midwestern backyard reveals the ground to be teeming with living things like moles, termites, cicadas, worms, and slugs.

Interactives

- Peer through an illuminated panel to spy on tiny organisms that carry on decomposition in the soil.
- Take on the role of a termite in its colony in an interactive computer game.
- What do star-nosed moles feel with those noses? Touch a tactile simulator to find out.

Darkness Deep within Caves

A dramatic introduction to caves, beginning with a walk-through diorama of a Kentucky cavern inhabited by bats, blind cave fish, cave flatworms, and cave crayfish. Also included-- a diorama of the newly-discovered Movile cave in Romania.

Interactives

- What are your chances of survival as a cave-dwelling creature? Find out!
- Listen to sounds and echolocate your way out of a computer cave maze.
- Identify above ground "cousins" of cave-dwelling creatures.
- Follow the evolution of cave salamanders through a cartoon.
- Compare open and closed cave systems, including food sources.

Darkness of the Deep Sea

Catch a glimpse of the deep sea through a life-size diorama of the Galapagos Rift Vent Field and a smaller model of the Pacific Ocean Floor. See a sulphur-belching vent field, chemosynthetic bacteria, tube worms, crabs, fish, and more, including bioluminescent organisms.

Interactives

- Use a simulated control panel to pilot a "submarine" toward the ocean floor.
- Play the mating game and match up deep-sea creatures.
- Place ocean organisms in their proper ocean zone.
- Camouflage a glowing squid in a computer game.
- Stand on a balancing device to feel how jellyfish keep their balance in the water.
- Discover how bioluminescence is used by different deep-sea organisms.

Darkness and Humans

See a life-size diorama of an urban, residential setting and explore myths and legends about the dark, the history of making light, and technological adaptations to the dark made by humans. Try out devices that use sonar and infrared, as well as those invented to assist the visually impaired.

Interactives

- Compare natural and man-made adaptations for the dark.
- Use your sense of touch, hearing, and a cane to navigate in a designated space.
- View equipment designed for the visually impaired.
- Challenge yourself to conquer a maze with your eyes closed.
- Learn the Braille alphabet and answer trivia questions written in Braille.