

## Where Every Day is Earth Day

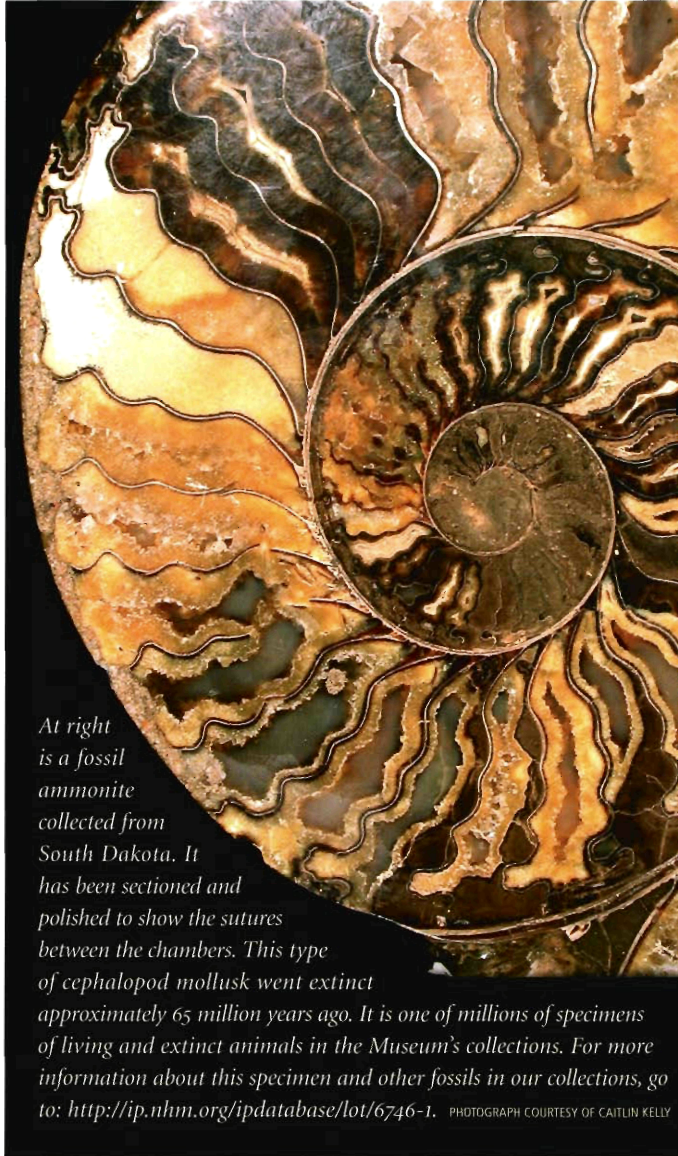
BY JOEL W. MARTIN

When Earth Day, a celebration of the wonder and majesty of life on our planet that was conceived of right here in California, was first celebrated on the Vernal Equinox in 1970, it was hailed as one of the first movements toward recognizing our role as stewards of the planet's natural resources. Yet one California institution had already been celebrating the Earth and caring for her treasures for more than 90 years.

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County has been devoted since its inception to the collection, preservation, interpretation, and stewardship of our natural and cultural worlds. Focusing globally while simultaneously celebrating life in Southern California, we have built collections that span the globe, represent the past and the present, and build toward the future.

Every exhibit, educational program, and funding campaign ultimately relies directly on the strength of these collections and on the quality of the research that unlocks their secrets for our varied audiences. Small wonder, then, that these collections are recognized as *the* strength of the Museum, the one firm building block upon which all else rests. We continue to collect, perform research, and interpret the wonders of nature; it is not only our mission, it is our duty and our calling.

This April, as we celebrate Earth Day on the one day each spring when day and night are perfectly balanced, we celebrate also the balance among collections, research, education and exhibits that defines us as one of the finest natural history museums in the world.



*At right is a fossil ammonite collected from South Dakota. It has been sectioned and polished to show the sutures between the chambers. This type of cephalopod mollusk went extinct approximately 65 million years ago. It is one of millions of specimens of living and extinct animals in the Museum's collections. For more information about this specimen and other fossils in our collections, go to: <http://ip.nhm.org/ipdatabase/lot/6746-1>. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CAITLIN KELLY*