

What is *TAXIDERM*Y and why do scientists do it?

There are many ways of preserving, or saving, an animal's body for study. Some animals in the Museum--like birds and mammals--are preserved by removing the soft insides of the animal's body and preparing and stuffing the skins. This process of keeping the outside of an animal's body and filling the insides to preserve the animal is called taxidermy.

At the Nature Museum, many taxidermied specimens are part of our collection. Collections are an essential part of a museum's research and education functions and also serve an important role in environmental conservation. Specimens--individual pieces from a collection--can be excellent tools for connecting people to a topic of study or interest, whether they're displayed in a museum or used in educational programming. They also allow people to have an up-close look at something that they couldn't otherwise access. Preserving and displaying specimens in different ways can tell us different things about the lives of the plants and animals in a collection.

Let's make a taxidermy model!



You'll need:

- Cotton balls or batting (for filling the model)
- Scrap fabric or tissue paper
- Yarn or string (to close the model; with adult help, needle and thread or hot glue might be used!)
- A popsicle stick or a chopstick

Step by step procedure (inspired by the process of taxidermy):

- 1) Prepare your materials and start with a piece of fabric or tissue paper (this represents the prepared skin and the fur or feathers).
- 2) Add filling and some structure using your cotton balls and stick (this part of the model is similar to what happens during taxidermy - the scientist uses foam/ stuffing and wire to create an accurate body shape inside).
- 3) Shape and close your model using your string or yarn! (This represents the way the scientist encloses the materials inside the taxidermied specimen.) You can shape this and add details or patterns to the outside, if you like.
- 4) Create a data tag -- include the date, your name and your animal's name!

