Cleveland Museum of Natural History Brings National Geographic Photo Ark to Life

New special exhibition pairs 21 extraordinary wildlife portraits with real specimens from the Museum's collections

CLEVELAND, OH—November 5, 2026— The Cleveland Museum of Natural History is excited to welcome the National Geographic Photo Ark, a compelling exhibition showcasing the work of National Geographic Explorer and photographer Joel Sartore. The Photo Ark features striking portraits of more than 18,000 species of birds, fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. The Museum's presentation will pair 21 Photo Ark photographs with specimens from its own collections, giving visitors a unique opportunity to experience some of the featured species up close and in three dimensions. The special exhibition opens Thursday, November 19 in the Museum's Corning Gallery, and will be included with general admission.

The interactions between animals and their environments are critical to maintaining a healthy planet. But for many species, time is running out—and when one species disappears, the effects can extend throughout an ecosystem. The National Geographic Photo Ark is a multi-year effort to raise awareness of and find solutions to some of the most pressing issues affecting wildlife and their habitats. Led by Sartore, the project aims to document every species living in the world's zoos, aquariums, and wildlife sanctuaries; inspire action through education; and help protect wildlife by supporting on-the-ground conservation efforts.

"The Photo Ark's remarkable portraits offer visitors an extraordinary opportunity to come face-to-face with animals from across the globe, and we're excited to extend that experience by featuring specimens from the Museum's own collections—many of which have never before been on display," said Meenakshi Sharma, the Museum's Acting President & CEO. "Creating more

opportunities for people to engage with our collections and the research they support is an important part of our work, and this exhibition allows us to do that in a compelling and accessible way. We hope visitors leave with a greater understanding of why protecting biodiversity matters to all of us."

The Photo Ark began in 2006, when Sartore launched the project in his hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska. Since then, he has traveled the world in pursuit of an ambitious goal: creating a photographic archive of global biodiversity that will eventually feature portraits of more than 25,000 species in human care.

No matter its size, each animal is photographed with the same affection and respect. Against simple black or white backgrounds, the animals command the viewer's attention, resulting in portraits that are at once striking, intimate, and moving. Together, the images create an important record of the animals' existence while underscoring the importance of protecting wildlife before it is too late. "I want to get people to care, to fall in love, and to take action," said Sartore.

The Photo Ark also serves as a powerful educational resource, helping people of all ages explore the planet's extraordinary biodiversity and build a stronger connection with Earth's wildlife. At the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, that experience will be enriched by specimens from the Museum's collections, many of which have never before been on display, offering visitors a rare opportunity to see species and their adaptations up close beyond the photographs. Together, the portraits and specimens connect the global scope of the Photo Ark with the Museum's work to inspire curiosity and foster appreciation for the natural world.

The Museum thanks exhibition sponsor Carol Barnak. *Photo Ark* is organized and traveled by the National Geographic Society. This exhibition is located in Corning Gallery and included with general admission.

About the National Geographic Photo Ark
In 2006, National Geographic Explorer and photographer Joel Sartore started the National Geographic Photo Ark in an effort to document every species living in the world's zoos, aquariums and wildlife sanctuaries, inspire action through awareness and education, and help protect species and their habitats by supporting on-the-ground conservation efforts.

To learn more, visit www.nationalgeographic.org/photo-ark

About the Cleveland Museum of Natural History

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History illuminates the world around us and inspires visitors to engage with the natural forces that shape their lives. Since its founding in 1920, the Museum has pioneered scientific research to advance knowledge across diverse fields of study and used its outstanding collections, which encompass millions of artifacts and specimens, to deepen the public's understanding of the dynamic connections between humans and nature. Through its Natural Areas Program, the Museum stewards more than 12,500 acres of protected ecosystems across northern Ohio. A community gathering place, educational center, and research institution, the Museum is a vital resource that serves Cleveland and the nation. For more information, visit CMNH.org.

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