

## **Dr. Kirk Johnson, Sant Director Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History**

Kirk Johnson has been the Sant Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History since October 2012. At the National Museum of Natural History, Johnson leads a staff of nearly 500 who, each year, host more than 7 million visitors, publish more than 600 scientific papers, and care for 127 million specimens in the world's largest natural history collection.

Johnson is a paleontologist who has led expeditions in 11 countries and 19 states that resulted in the discovery of more than 1,400 fossil sites. His research focuses on fossil plants and the extinction of the dinosaurs. He is known for his scientific books and articles, popular books, museum exhibits, presentations, and collaborations with artists. In 2010-11, he led the *Snowmastodon Project*, the excavation of an amazing ice age site near Snowmass Village, Colorado. This dig recovered more than 5,400 bones of mammoths, mastodons and other ice age animals and was featured in the NOVA documentary, *Ice Age Death Trap*, and in Johnson's book, *Digging Snowmastodon, Discovering an Ice Age World in the Colorado Rockies*.

Before coming to the Smithsonian, Kirk Johnson was vice president and chief curator at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. At the Denver museum, Johnson oversaw a 70-person research and collections division that included curators, archivists, conservators, and technicians. He was responsible for the museum's 24 collections, and he led the completion of the museum's first comprehensive long-term collections and research plan. He served as a curator of paleontology since joining the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in 1991. As vice president at the Denver museum, Johnson was part of a team that led the museum and managed its \$40 million annual budget.

Johnson holds numerous professional memberships, and was recently appointed by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee. Johnson was also recently elected to National Geographic's Committee for Research and Exploration.

Johnson is originally from Bellevue, Washington, and has a bachelor's degree in geology and fine art from Amherst College, a master's degree in geology and paleobotany from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate in geology and paleobotany from Yale University. He did postdoctoral research at the University of South Australia and served as a Crosby lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.