What is the main condition for the preservation of the remains of any living creature?

It is animals and plants that lived in or near water whose remains are most likely to be preserved, for one of the necessary conditions of preservation is quick burial, and it is only in the seas and rivers, and sometimes lakes, where mud and silt have been continuously deposited, that bodies and the like can be rapidly covered over and preserved.

But even in the most favorable circumstances, only a small fraction of the creatures that die are preserved in this way before decay sets in or, even more likely before scavengers eat them.

After all, all living creatures live by feeding on something else, whether it be a plant or animal, dead or alive, and it is only by chance that such a fate is avoided.

The remains of plants and animals that lived on land are much more rarely preserved, for there is seldom anything to cover them over.

When you think of the innumerable birds that one sees flying about, not to mention the equally numerous small animals like field mice and voles which you do not see, one rarely comes across a dead body, except, of course, on the roads.

They decompose and are quickly destroyed by the weather or eaten by some other creature.

It is almost always due to some very special circumstances that traces of land animals survive, as by falling into inaccessible caves, or into an ice crevasse, like the Siberian mammoths, when the whole animal is sometimes preserved, as in a refrigerator.

This is what happened to the famous Beresovka mammoth, which was found preserved and in good condition.

In his mouth were the remains of fir trees—the last meal that he had before he fell into the crevasse and broke his back.

The mammoth has now been restored in the Palaeontological Museum in St. Petersburg.

Other animals were trapped in tar pits, like the elephants, sabre-toothed cats, and numerous other creatures that are found at Rancho la Brea, which is now just a suburb of Los Angeles.

Apparently, what happened was that water collected on these tar pits, and the bigger animals like the elephants ventured out onto the apparently firm surface to drink, and were promptly bogged in the tar.

And then, when they were dead, the carnivores, like the saber-toothed cats and the giant wolves, came out to feed and suffered the same fate.

There are also an endless number of birds in the tar as well.

Animals or plants that live in or near water are most likely to be preserved because they will be covered quickly by mud and silt.

Dead bodies of animals usually decompose or are quickly destroyed by the weather or eaten by other creatures.

The remains of the Beresovka mammoth were accidentally preserved because it fell into an ice crevasse and was immediately frozen, as in a freezer.

Except for the wooden floors, the old building is in a good state of preservation.

They found lots of old cups and saucers and the like in a small rubbish tip in the grounds of the large house.

When the factory closed down, the machinery was sold off for a small fraction of its true value.

We describe vultures as scavengers because they feed on dead animals.

We have made innumerable attempts to interview the Minister about this question but with no success.

We discovered that the terrible smell in the cellar came from a decomposing rat.

Eagles will often build their nests in totally inaccessible places, for example, on a ledge on a cliff face.

The painting found in the attic was in a dreadful state, but it has now been restored and looks fine.

As the man drove his car into the field, it promptly became bogged down in the mud.

Extinct animals that lived in or near water were most likely to be preserved because they were quickly covered with mud and silt.

If animals are not preserved quickly in this way, they will decay, decompose, or be eaten by scavengers.

Animals that live on land, and birds, of course, are much more rarely preserved because there is seldom anything to cover them.

When they die, they decompose and are quickly destroyed by the weather or eaten by other creatures.

People find it difficult to resist the fascination of a natural history museum where the skeletons and fossils of extinct forms of life are on display.

It is this fascination, too, felt by so many people, that attracts them to adventure stories like The Lost World or films like Jurassic Park.

What sorts of things can one see in a natural history museum?

The remains of animals that existed in prehistoric times.

Sometimes we can see just parts of a creature, sometimes the whole skeleton.

There are reptiles, dinosaurs, and tyrannosaurs.

There are pterodactyls, the horrific-looking creatures with long, tooth-filled beaks, which were the ancestors of our present-day birds.

There are the remains of fish, small and large, especially early sharks, and there are fossilized crustaceans.

There are the remains of early mammals, too, and what is for most people perhaps the most fascinating, the remains of our ancestors, early man, such as Neanderthal man.

Museums also display the remains of animals that have become extinct relatively recently, like the flightless bird called the dodo.

It is sad to think that the dodo only became extinct about three hundred years ago, and would probably not have become extinct if Europeans had not hunted it on its native island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean.

How many more forms of animal life are in danger of becoming extinct today that our children will only see in museums?

And then, of course, there are those creatures which have been called ‘living fossils’—primitive forms of life which came into being millions of years ago and which have surprisingly survived, apparently without developing greatly.

Examples are the coelacanth (the fish that was first discovered earlier in the twentieth century) and the duck-billed platypus in Australia.

The archaeologists are waiting until the weather improves before they continue digging.

After they die, most land animals decompose or are eaten by other creatures.

I will telephone you as soon as I get to London.

They have promised to phone us when they have some definite news.

The old lady does not go out in the winter, for she feels the cold a great deal.

I’ve got a present for you.

The new film received favorable reviews.

What is your favorite dish?

Be careful! That lobster is alive.

All living creatures need air and water.

Avoid traveling during the rush hour.

I can’t prevent you from going if you want to.

Can you ask your father to move his car? It’s in the way.

I stopped on the way here to visit my uncle.

In a way, I can see what you mean, but I can’t agree with you completely.

Oh, by the way, while we’re talking about old college friends, have you heard from John lately?

It is almost always due to some very special circumstances that traces of land animals survive.

The train is due to arrive in three minutes.

Give the man his due, even if you dislike him.

Halifax lies due North of here.

Please do as I say.

He was white as a sheet.

He left as suddenly as he came.

Don’t act like a baby.

The carnivores, like saber-toothed cats, came out to feed and suffered the same fate.

The remains of life forms can only survive intact if they are covered up quickly in the right conditions.

Inland conditions ensure that the preservation of life forms is relatively rare.

Unusual circumstances for the preservation of life forms can be provided by freezing conditions.

Animals were trapped in tar because they were deceived by the appearance of the pits.

The remains of plants are far more rarely preserved.

There is seldom anything to cover them over.

It is almost always because of special circumstances that traces of land animals survive.

In his mouth were the remains of fir trees—the last meal he ate before he fell.

They decay and are quickly destroyed by the weather.

They were quickly bogged in the tar.