

Finding Wonders Timeline

“Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.”
– Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

1647 April 2, Maria Sibylla Merian is born in Frankfurt, Germany.

1660 Maria Merian collects caterpillars and paints images of their life cycles and food, a theme she will repeat in many other paintings.

1699 Maria Merian and her younger daughter sail to South America, where for two years they study and paint plants and small animals.

1717 Maria Sibylla Merian dies.

1799 May 21 Mary Anning is born in Lyme Regis, England.

1811 Mary Anning and her brother, Joseph, discover the skull of an unknown animal. Mary excavates the fossilized skeleton of what will be known as the first ichthyosaur any human has seen.

1823 Mary Anning discovers the first complete plesiosaurus.

1828 Mary Anning finds and excavates the first pterosaur to be seen in England.

1842 The word dinosaur, which means “fearfully great lizard,” is first used by Richard Owen.

1847 Mary Anning dies.

1818 August 1, Maria Mitchell is born in Nantucket, Massachusetts.

1847 Oct. 1, Maria Mitchell becomes the first American woman to discover a comet.

1848 Maria Mitchell is elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the first woman and only one until many years later.

1865 Maria Mitchell begins teaching at Vassar College, a position she holds until shortly before her death.

1889 Maria Mitchell dies.

1945 Two women are admitted to the Royal Society of London, the oldest scientific organization in continuous existence, and which had previously excluded women.

2005 Lawrence Summer, then president of Harvard University, suggests that women are underrepresented in the sciences because, among other things, they don't have the natural aptitude and ability. Outrage ensues. Making sure that more women are welcomed to study science, technology, engineering, and math increasingly becomes part of the national agenda.