



Fossils Rock

Explore the Prehistoric World!



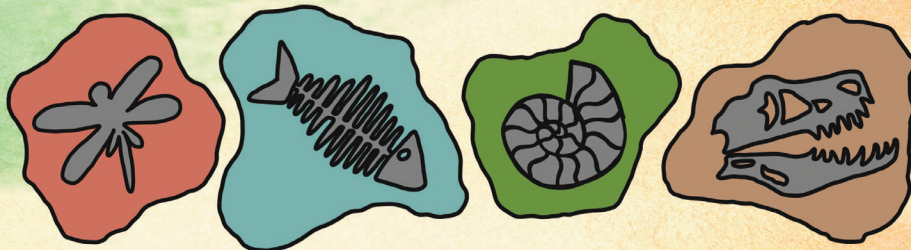
Fossils Rock!

Do you like digging in the sand? Imagining things?
Finding treasures and organizing them?

The things kids do for fun build the observation and
questioning skills that scientists use to learn what the
earth was like millions of years ago.

Try out your skills by becoming a curator, a paleontologist,
and a paleoartist. Or imagine traveling back in time to
visit the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic eras.

Discover the secrets of earth's past – and then let us
know what you find!






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The Earth Is Really Old

ERA	TIME (millions of years ago)
	TODAY
CENOZOIC	 66
MESOZOIC	 245
PALEOZOIC	 540

The earth is four and a half billion years old. Life began 3.5 billion years ago, but complex multi-celled life only emerged 540 million years ago.

This timeline, and the scenes on the windows, show three eras:

CENOZOIC: 66 million years ago - today

MESOZOIC: 245 million - 66 million years ago

PALEOZOIC: 540 million - 245 million years ago

Explore these eras, and the plants and animals that lived in them by creating scenes with the plant and animal magnets.

How Old Is Old?

Clap your hands together once. Now imagine that clap represents a full year. That's 365 days – already a long time!



If one year is one clap, then one million years is twelve full days of clapping.

No stopping! No sleeping! Boy, are my arms tired.

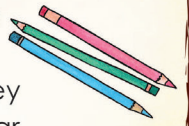
One billion years is almost 33 years of claps.

INFO
CARD

INFO
CARD

Can You Draw It? Paleoaartists imagine what prehistoric creatures might have looked like.

They work with other scientists to learn as much as possible before they start to draw. Information comes from fossils and observations of similar living animals. **Be a paleoaartist and use the fossil outlines and information from the cards to imagine what these mysterious creatures looked like!**



Please do not
remove the
pencils from
this station.

Can You Imagine It?

Meet a Paleontologist!



Meet Benjamin Otoo. He is a PhD student at the University of Chicago. He studies some of the oldest tetrapod fossils found. Tetrapods are animals with backbones, fingers, and toes.

Benjamin grew up in Washington D.C., and as a kid one of his favorite parts of the natural history museum were the dioramas. They made him want to understand how ancient environments worked, why certain animals and plants lived together at different times, who ate what, or whom!

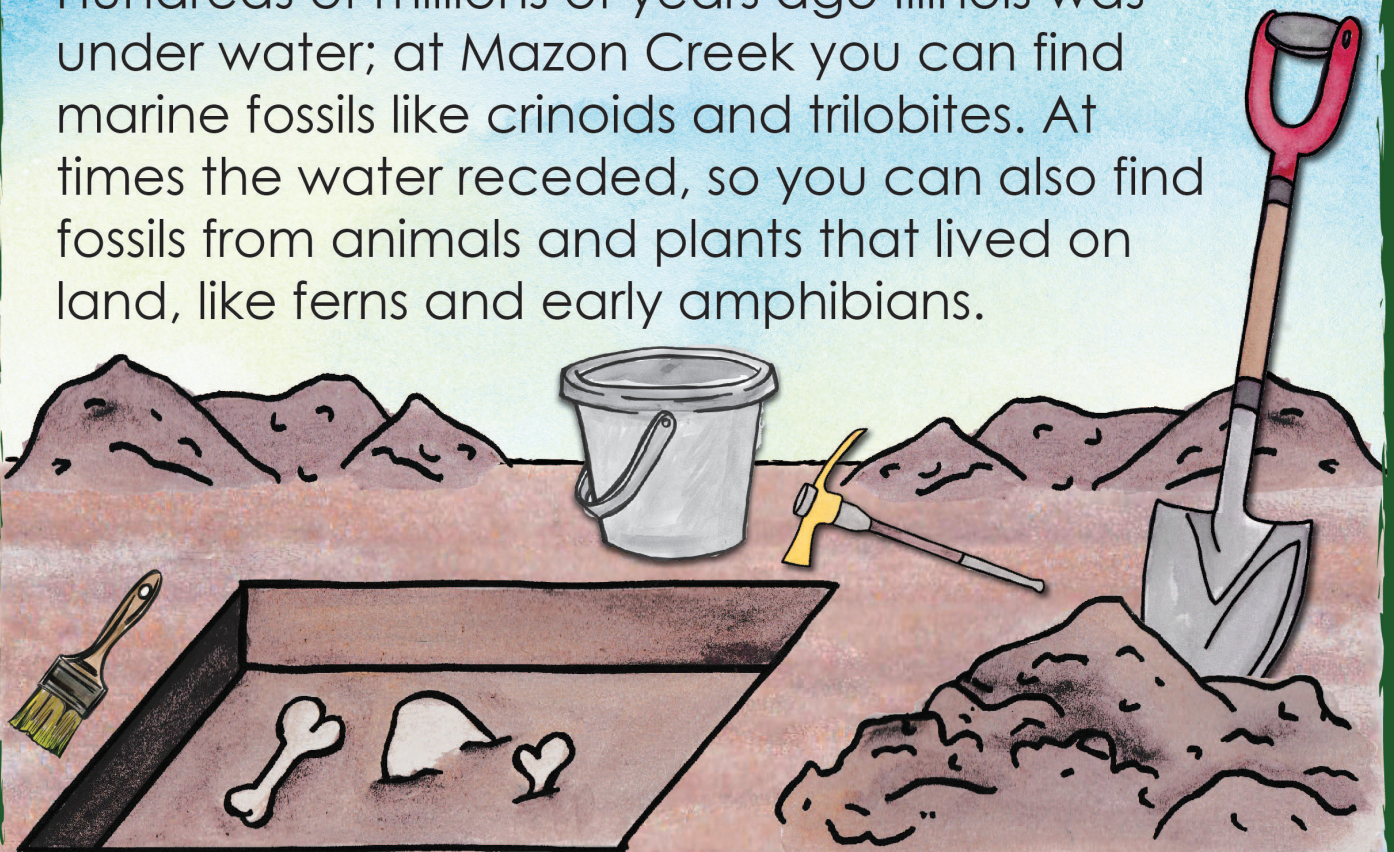
These days, Benjamin uses fossils to figure out how tetrapod bodies worked while they were alive. He also uses computer programs to determine how these animals were related to each other, and how they interacted with other animals and plants in their environments in places like Mazon Creek.

Can You Dig It?

Welcome to Mazon Creek, one of the best fossil dig sites in Illinois. You can find things here today that were formed 420 million years ago!

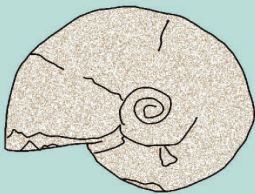
Paleontologists are scientists who study prehistoric animal and plant life. Some work in the lab, and others go into the field to look for fossils. Be a paleontologist and dig in our Mazon Creek fossil bed to learn about life long ago.

Hundreds of millions of years ago Illinois was under water; at Mazon Creek you can find marine fossils like crinoids and trilobites. At times the water receded, so you can also find fossils from animals and plants that lived on land, like ferns and early amphibians.

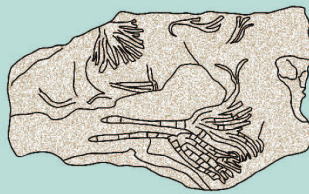


Can You Find It?

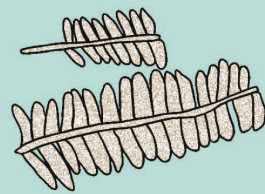
Under the right conditions, animal and plant remains become fossils due to chemical changes over time. Fossils are rocks, which means they last a long, long time in the earth. That is why we can still find them today! Can you find these fossils in the sand table?



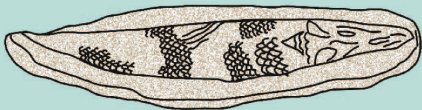
Ammonite



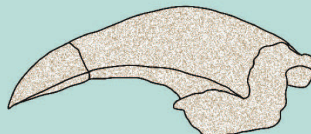
Crinoid



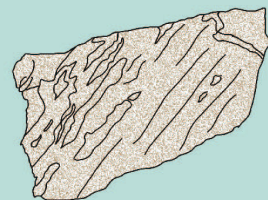
Fern



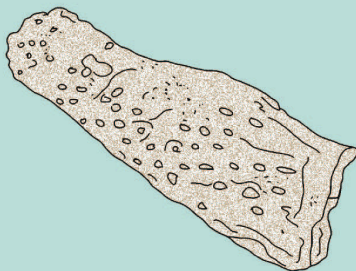
Fish



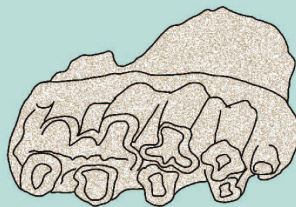
Giant Ground
Sloth Claw



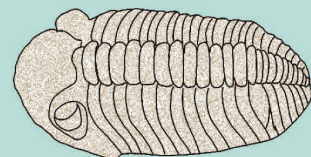
Fossilized
Wood



Lepidodendron
(Scale Tree)



Mastadon
Tooth



Trilobite

Can You Sort It?

Meet a Collections Manager!



Meet Dr. Az Klymiuk, a paleontologist who specializes in fossil plants, and received a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Now she works as a Collections Manager at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois, where she is in charge of the fossil plant collection.

Az grew up in the forest in northern Canada, and spent her summers looking for fossils and collecting plants that she pressed in a book.

These days, Az does research on prehistoric plants, makes sure that the collection is accessible for other researchers, and works hard to keep the Field Museum's plant fossils safe for future generations of scientists.

Can You Draw It?

Meet a Paleoartist!

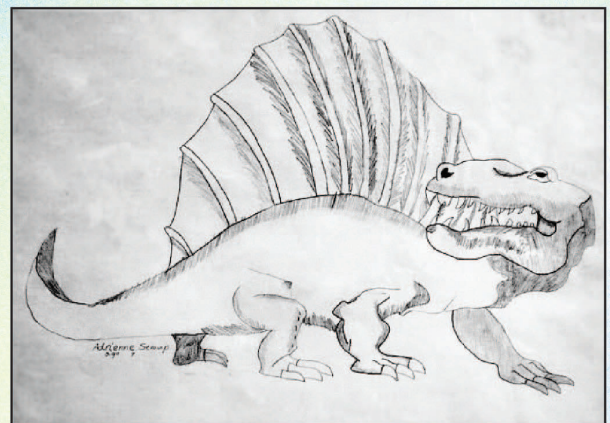


Meet Adrienne Stroup, a paleoartist who works at the Field Museum in Chicago.

As a kid, Adrienne was inspired by books about prehistoric life and the amazing illustrations that brought these ancient animals to life.

She spent a lot of time drawing the pictures from the books, including this drawing of a Dimetrodon she made at age 7.

Now, at the Field Museum, Adrienne cares for fossils, works with other scientists, and uses her art to share new discoveries in paleontology and inspire the next generation of scientists!



Can You Sort It? Collections Managers are the people who study objects like fossils and decide what to display in an exhibit.

Fossils are the remains or traces of plants and animals. The fossils in this exhibit are from millions of years ago.

Be a collections manager and create a fossil collection!



- Pick out fossils you think are interesting.
- Arrange your fossils on the shelf any way you like.

Should the fossils be smallest to biggest?

Smoothest to roughest? Oldest to newest?

There are hundreds of ways to sort these fossils!