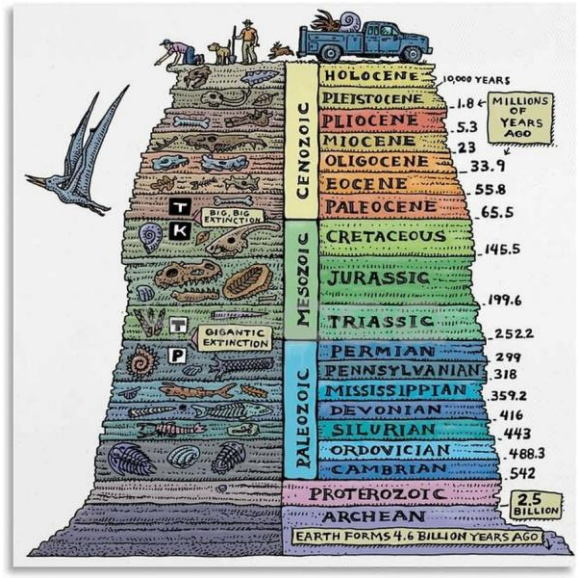
MISSION CONSERVATION ACTIVITY GUIDE

October 2026 – Fantastic Fossils

Hello agents! This October, Wonders of Wildlife invites you to travel back in time and discover the fantastic world of fossils! From ancient plants and tiny sea creatures to enormous prehistoric animals, fossils help us understand the animals of the past and the present. Through this month's activities, you'll learn how fossils form, search for signs of life like a paleontologist, and discover what these incredible clues can teach us about Earth's past. Grab your explorer's gear and get ready to dig into the fascinating world of fossils!



Outdoor Activity: Walk Through Deep Time

Fossils can be millions or even billions of years old! Those numbers are so large that they can be difficult to imagine. In this activity, you'll turn a sidewalk, driveway, or other outdoor space into a timeline of Earth's history and take a walk-through time!

Materials:

- Sidewalk chalk
- Outdoor sidewalk, driveway, or paved area

Procedure:

1. **Find a long outdoor space where you have permission to use sidewalk chalk. Be careful and mindful of any vehicles that might pass through your chosen space.**
2. Draw a line about 20 steps long with chalk. One end represents Earth around 4.6 billion years ago, the other represents today.

3. Along your timeline, mark a few important moments in the history of life.
4. Add pictures beside your marks! Draw shells for ancient ocean life, plants for the first forests, dinosaurs, mammals, or anything else you would like.
5. **Start at the beginning of your timeline and slowly walk toward today. Imagine all the animals and environments that appeared and disappeared along the way.**
6. **When you reach the end, notice how close many familiar animals and humans are to the very end of Earth's enormous timeline!**

Timeline Locations:

- **0 Steps: Earth Forms (4.6 billion years ago)**
- **5 Steps: Some of the earliest forms of life appeared (3.5 billion years ago)**
- **17 Steps: Complex multicellular life became common (542 million years ago)**
- **18 Steps: Plants began spreading onto land (470 million years ago)**
- **19 Steps: Dinosaurs appeared (230 million years ago)**
- **19 ½ Steps: Non-avian dinosaurs went extinct (66 million years ago)**
- **20 Steps: Today**

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Great job, wildlife detectives! Scientists often study animals by looking for the same kinds of clues you just searched for! These clues can help us learn what animals are present in an area even when we can't see them! The next time you head outside, keep your eyes and ears open—you may discover that wildlife is all around you!

Indoor Activity: Make an Ammonite Fossil



Ammonites were marine animals related to modern squid and octopuses. They lived inside coiled shells, and they are some of the most recognizable fossils in the world! Let's try making our very own ammonite fossil!

Materials:

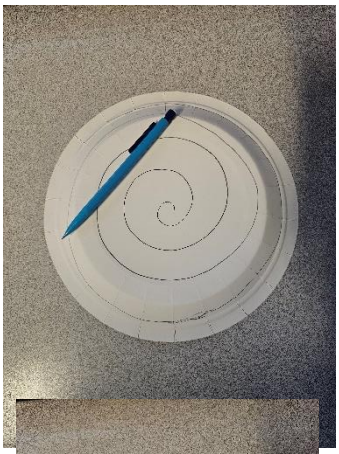
- Paper plate
- Pencil
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Scissors (with adult help)
- Optional: glue, sand, or brown/gray paint

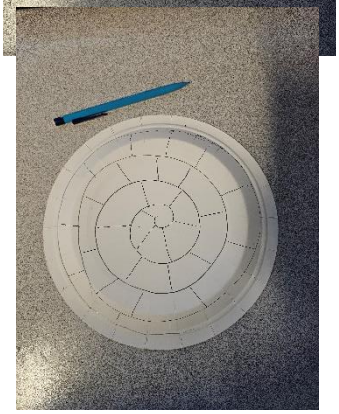


Steps:

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1. Use a pencil to draw a large spiral starting near the center of your paper plate and curling outward toward the edge.
2. Add curved lines across the spiral to create the different chambers of an ammonite shell.
3. Decorate the plate using browns, grays, tans, or any colors you would like.
4. Carefully cut around the outside of the spiral to give your ammonite its coiled shape. Ask an adult for help with scissors if needed.
5. For an extra fossil-like appearance, lightly color or paint the surface with different shades of brown and gray. You can even glue a little sand onto it for texture.
6. Display your ammonite and imagine what it might have looked like swimming through an ancient ocean!



Fantastic Fossil Fact: Ammonites were ocean animals that lived on Earth for hundreds of millions of years. Although their coiled shells may look similar to a snail's shell, ammonites were actually relatives of modern squid, octopuses, and nautiluses! Scientists frequently find their fossilized shells in rocks that once formed beneath ancient oceans.

We hope you enjoyed the activity guide this month! Don't forget to check out this month's at-home mission! To see a list of our other missions, or to learn more about Wonders of Wildlife, visit us at https://wondersofwildlife.org/mission-conservation/