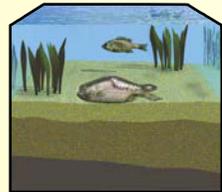


What Are Fossils?

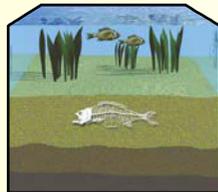
Fossils are the petrified remains of plants and animals from more than ten thousand years ago. 'Petrified' means that the plants and animals have turned into a stony



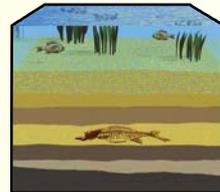
substance. Fossils can show the skeletons of animals or the imprints of plants, animals or footprints. They are found in layers of sedimentary rock, which is formed of sand and mud that has been compressed over time.



The fish dies and sinks to the sea bed. The flesh rots and is eaten by other small organisms, leaving just a skeleton.



A layer of mud and sand covers the skeleton. This helps preserve it. Not much oxygen can get to the skeleton - the decaying process is slowed down.



The mud and sand become sedimentary rock. The skeleton dissolves. The space it leaves behind fills with minerals. The fossil is formed.

How Are Fossils Made?



The movement of the Earth's crust brings the fossil closer to the surface. It is ready to be discovered!

What Does A Palaeontologist Do?

Palaeontologists are scientists who study fossils. Studying the remains of plants and animals can help them to find out what life was like a long time ago.

How Are Fossils Identified And Dated?

Scientists have measured different layers of sedimentary world. Using this information work out the age of each layer. As fossils are discovered, them is recorded and shared. This fossil record helps palaeontologists identify fossils by comparing them to similar ones .

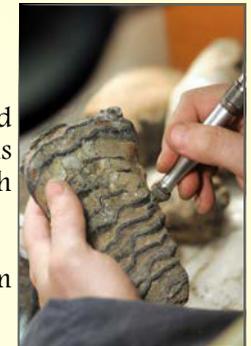


radiation levels in the rock found around the they have been able to Fossils are roughly the which they are found. information about palaeontologists identify fossils by comparing them to similar ones .

What Can We Learn From Studying Fossils?

From fossils, palaeontologists can explore how animals and plants have evolved over time, as well as how organisms interacted with each other. Fossils have been found with similar characteristics to living plants and animals.

This horseshoe crab is believed to have evolved from trilobites. Can you see some similarities?



Would you like to be a palaeontologist?

Fascinating Facts

Did you know that lots of fossils are found in amber? Amber is formed from tree sap; when it seeps out of a tree, insects get trapped and preserved inside it.

Scientists estimate that less than one per cent of all living things in the history of Earth may have been, or ever will be fossilised. We will never know about most of the plants and animals that existed on Earth millions of years ago.