**Shortcuts**

**H**umans have wondered about the origin of fossils since prehistoric times. Greek and Roman scholars made some of the first attempts to explain how it was possible for images of plants and animals to become imprinted or embedded in stone.

For the past 200 years, scientific detectives called "paleontologists" have literally been "putting the pieces together" in an attempt to understand the mysterious world of fossils.

Paleontologists believe that only a tiny fraction of the plants and animals that have lived on earth are preserved as fossils. Scientists from all over the world have combined more than 200 years of observations to create a timeline of life on earth called the "fossil record." The fossil record shows a detailed timeline of the plants and animals that have lived on the earth for the past 500 million years.

A paleontologist is a scientist who studies plants and animals that lived during prehistoric times and how they relate to modern species.

**Paleontologists**

Paleontologists must make careful notes about each fossil they discover. Information such as the location and type of rock where the fossil was discovered is important. Fossils that lack this information are almost useless to a paleontologist.

**The study of prehistoric plants is called "paleobotany."**

**"Technology" is the study of trace fossils such as tracks, trails, and droppings.**

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**Leave No Stone UNTURNED**

Most fossils are found in scattered pieces and must put back together like a jigsaw puzzle.

Paleontologists play an important role in the effort to locate underground fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas. By studying fossils, paleontologists are able to determine how the earth's climate and geography have changed over time.

Paleontologists use information about living species to give them clues as to how prehistoric animals may have looked or behaved.

**Palaeontology**

Palaeontology is one of the few fields of science where many new discoveries are made by amateurs.

**The Bone Wars**

In the late 1870s, Edward Cope and Othniel Marsh competed over a site filled with dinosaur bones that was discovered near the Rocky Mountains. Both men employed armed workers, and their bitter rivalry was eventually known as the "bone wars."

**In the early days of palaeontology, most fossils were discovered by chance.**

**Word Search**

Can you find the hidden words? Search carefully because some words are backward or diagonal.

- DISCOVER
- BONES
- FOSSILS
- DINOSAUR
- ROCKS
- TIME
- SCIENCE
- STONE
- PAST
- RECORD
- EARTH
- ROSES
- SPECIES
- LAYER
- OLD
- STRATA
- YEARS
- OLD