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## Types of Fossils

There are two main kinds of fossils: body fossils and trace fossils.

Body fossils show what an ancient organism looked like. These fossils formed when a living organism died and was quickly buried by mud, sand, or volcanic ash. Soft parts quickly decomposed. But the hard parts, like bones, remained.



Over time, minerals seeped into spaces in the hard parts. The minerals turned hard as stone. Layers of sediment piled up. Eventually, the land shifted or was worn away. This brought the fossils to the surface.



### Body Fossils

Many body fossils are the preserved remains of animals, such as bones, teeth, and claws. But trees can make body fossils, too. Over time, the wood petrifies, or becomes as hard as stone.



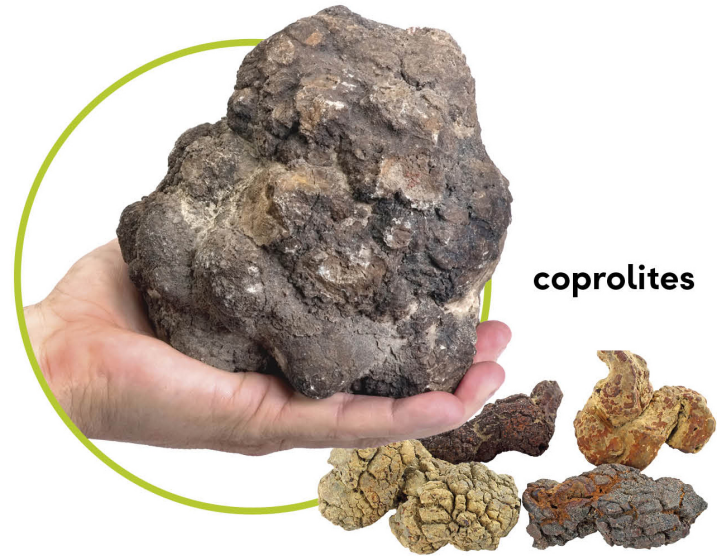
**fossilized  
dinosaur  
eggs**

are found nearby. These trace fossils are clues that tell us about the animals, too.

Eggs and nests can also become fossils. Some eggs are found in nests; others aren't. Some nests are grouped together, while others are all alone. Sometimes, fossils of adult animals

**Underground Fossils**

Animal burrows are another type of trace fossil. They show how ancient animals lived and moved underground.



Believe it or not, paleontologists also learn a lot from studying fossilized poop. Fossilized pieces of poop, called coprolites, are trace fossils. They can reveal what animals ate. Sometimes, poop has hidden treasures. Recently, scientists found a previously undiscovered species of beetle inside a coprolite. The beetle was 230 million years old!

# Glossary

**Amber**

A hard yellow or brown fossil made from the resin of trees

**Arid**

Extremely dry

**Body fossil**

The preserved remains of dead plants or animals, such as bones, teeth, and claws

**Carnivore**

An animal that eats other animals

**Cast fossil**

A solid fossil formed when minerals fill a mold and harden in the shape of the organism

**Coprolite**

Fossilized poop

**Excavate**

To dig out and remove

**Fossil**

The preserved remains or traces of a plant or animal that lived long ago

**Geologist**

A scientist who studies Earth and how it has changed over time

**Herbivore**

An animal that eats only plants

**Mold fossil**

A fossil formed by an imprint of an organism's shape

**Paleontologist**

A scientist who studies plant and animal fossils to learn about the past

**Petrified**

Turned to stone

**Preserved**

Kept or saved from breaking down over time

**Trace fossil**

Preserved signs of an organism's activities or behavior, such as footprints or burrows

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