

Jackson County Conservation  
Summer 2020—Weekly Nature Activity Series

We hope that our weekly nature activities can provide some outdoor fun for you and your family this summer.

Week 7: July 20

# Fossils

*Discover fossils and make your own salt dough fossils!*

## Fossil Hunt

Searching for fossils is like traveling back in time to get a peek at Earth's past. You don't have to be a paleontologist, anyone can find fossils.

Look for rocks in gravel driveways, rocky areas at a nearby park such as outcroppings, and areas with gravel, limestone, and other sedimentary rock.

Use the fossil guide included with this activity to help you identify fossils in the rocks you find.

## Salt Dough Fossil Activity

### Materials:

- ◇ 1 cup of salt
- ◇ 2 cups of flour
- ◇ 3/4 cup of water
- ◇ Leaves, flowers, sticks, rocks, etc.



### Instructions:

1. Go outside to collect leaves, flowers, sticks, rocks and other nature items.
2. Combine salt, flour, and water in a small bowl or dish. Mix well until dough forms.
3. When the dough forms, pinch off small fistfuls and shape into flatten rounds (similar size and shape of a cookie). Then press your nature object into the dough. Repeat this step with each object you find.
4. Bake at 200 degrees until your fossil is dry. The amount they need to bake depends on size and thickness of the fossil; thin flat fossils only take 45-60 minutes, thicker fossils take 2-3 hours or more.
5. After baking the salt dough, you can paint your fossils.



## What is a Fossil?

Most fossils are found in earth that once lay underwater. They usually formed from the hard parts—such as shells or bones—of living things.

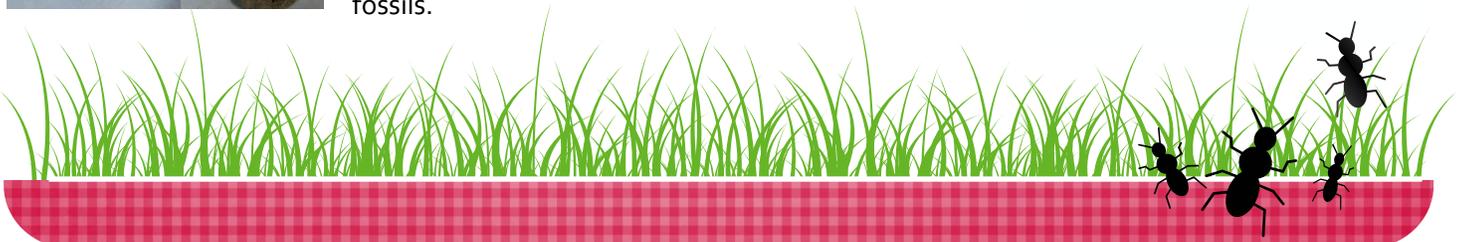
After a living thing died, it sank to the bottom of the sea. Layers of earth and the remains of other living things built up on top of it.

Over time, these layers turned into rock.

Eventually, part or all of the living thing's hard parts also turned into rock. The fossil is the shape of these hard parts in the rock.

## Contact Us

Jackson County Conservation  
Hurstville Interpretive Center  
18670 63rd Street  
Maquoketa, Iowa 52060  
(563) 652-3783  
summer@jacksonccb.com  
[www.JacksonCCB.com](http://www.JacksonCCB.com)



# Fossils of Iowa Field Guide

**Brachiopods:** These fossils are among the most common found in Iowa. They lived inside the protective cover of two hinged shells, attached to the floor of warm shallow seas that once covered Iowa. The Eastern Iowa specimens are about 375 million years old (Devonian).



**Gastropods:** Shells of marine animals are preserved fossils. Snails once followed the sea floor as a mollusk about 440 million years ago (Ordovician). The snail moved on a flat muscular foot and could withdraw inside its shell for protection.



**Seeds:** Fossils from seeds came from ends of a frond on a fern like tree 300 million years ago (Pennsylvanian).



**Clam Shell:** Like gastropods and clams are also mollusks that live in a protective shell. They lived on the sea floor 90 million years ago (Cretaceous). Clams were abundant in these waters, the last great island to cover Iowa.



**Crinoid:** These are referred to as the sea lily, they survived 500 years of Earth's history. These animals were related to starfish.



**Bryzoan:** These were known as filter feeding organisms that were once on the sea floor. They had a cork screw type bottom on them.



**Coral:** These corals lived on the bottom of the sea floor in warm, clear tropical seas that once covered Iowa. Many species were colonial which means that they lived together in a mass that have individual skeletons of lime, that resembles a honey comb. They were found in Devonian and Silurian seas, 375 to 425 million years ago.



**Horn Coral:** Corals lived alone in curved, cone shaped skeletons unattached to other individuals. This fossil "horn coral" housed the animals small tissues, including tentacles with filtered food particles from water.

