

Kids, You Can Find Fossils Here

Everyone knows about fossil dinosaurs, but did you know that you can find fossils that are twice as old as dinosaurs right here in the Town of Canandaigua? Go for a walk in a gully and you will find fossils in the rocks. You may also find them on the lake shore in the gravel if you sift through the stone carefully.



Most of our fossils are what is left of sea animals that lived here 400,000,000 (400 hundred million) years ago when our land was near the equator under a warm tropical ocean. There were also a few land plants, but not very many. The remains of the animals and plants are Devonian (Duh-voh-nee-an) fossils.

When the sea creatures died their bodies settled down to the bottom of the sea and were covered with soil. As more soil washed in from the land, the soil was pressed down hard by the weight and became rock. The rock particles slowly replaced the animal parts and took the same form. Some fossils may be the imprint of where an animal was buried, or sometimes hard parts of their shell can be found.

We know that many sea animals today are brightly colored, but the fossils you find will be the same color as stone. The hardest parts of the sea animals were more likely to become fossils, so many fossils look like only part of the animal.

Here is what you need to explore a gully for fossils:

1. Take an adult along – they will be helpful in finding things and carrying rocks home.
2. Insect repellent.
3. Wear long pants, shoes that are okay to walk in a stream, and a light colored shirt.
4. A collection sack for the adult to carry.
5. A fossil identification key.
6. A magnifying glass will be helpful. Do NOT take a hammer. Hitting rocks with a hammer is dangerous to your eyes and skin.

Walk slowly and look carefully along level layers of rock in the sides of the gully. Once you find a layer with fossils, follow that layer along the gully sides and you will find many kinds of fossils.

Don't forget to look up at the tops of the trees and enjoy the walk, too.



Trilobite



Crinoid



Crinoid stems



Brachiopod



Brachiopods



Horn corals



Nautiloid



Nautiloid



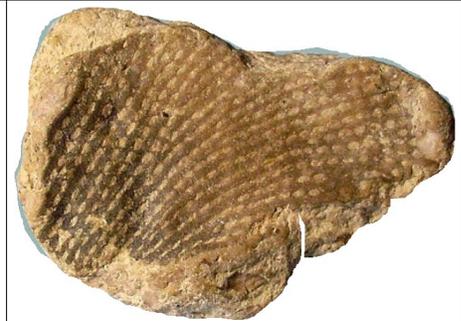
Bryozoan



Snails



Bivalve clams



Bryozoan

These examples show a few forms of the fossils most commonly found locally, but further exploration will be even more interesting. Many excellent collections are available for viewing and study at Finger Lakes Community College, the Rochester Museum and Science Center, the Palentological Research Institution in Ithaca, and the Buffalo Museum of Science are all within easy driving distance.