

Suzy's World

What is a fossil?

Fact

- A fossil is the remains of a plant or animal that has been preserved in rock.
- A fossil can be a footprint, animal dung, a piece of plant, an animal bone – all kinds of things.
- It is very rare for things to get fossilised because they have to be in the right place at the right time and be totally and quickly buried under material like sand, ice or volcanic material.
- Over a long period of time the plant or animal absorbs minerals which makes it turn hard or preserves it.
- Usually only the hardest part of a living thing remains like the shell or a bone but sometimes the whole creature or skeleton is preserved.
- The tree fossils in Curio Bay are from a forest that was growing there in the Jurassic Period

Do you know

- A scientist who studies prehistoric life and things like fossils is called a palaeontologist.
- Some of the oldest fossils ever found are 4.5 billion years old.
- The trees that once grew, millions of years ago in the place we now call Curio Bay were buried by volcanic ash and mud flows.
- Slowly, over a very long time the wood was replaced by silica which is very hard stone but the fossils still look like wood.
- Scallop fossils show that they were around New Zealand 3 million years ago. Moa fossils come from 500 – 2000 years ago. 20 million years ago fossils were made of gastropods – marine snails that have a coiled shell and that lived on the ocean floor.

Experiments you can do

Fossils are preserved remains of things that were around over 10,000 years ago. You can find fossilised bones, eggs, insects, trees, plants and animal poo. Now, you're probably not going to find 10,000 year old fossils in your garden that easily but you may find evidence of creatures living in your garden.

Have a look for empty cicada skins, empty snail shells, dead spiders, empty monarch chrysalis and things like that. What kinds of places do you find them in? Near the food that creature likes to eat? Near places that it usually lives? Is it tucked away out of the wind and rain?

Find out how the Chinese delicacy "Hundred year old eggs" is made by preserving eggs.

Other Investigations

Next time you're at the beach make a footprint in the sand and see how long it takes for the footprint to disappear. Imagine the footprint was made in rock. Would it disappear as quickly? What kinds of things would need to happen for the rock foot print to disappear?

Jokes

What did the fossil say to the other fossil? Nothing, fossils can't talk!
From Caitlin