

Many kids have a hobby—an activity that they enjoy and do often in their free time. For example, some kids like to collect stamps or coins. Others like to catch and observe bugs. Some like to draw or paint.



Some people leave their hobby behind as they grow up. But others never lose their special interest. In fact, for some, their hobby becomes the work they do as an adult.

This is a story about Jørn Hurum, a paleontologist whose childhood hobby became his lifelong passion and career.



Jørn Hurum, age 5



Jørn Hurum, paleontologist, at work

Facts About Fossils

Some rocks contain fossils, or the remains of animals or plants from long ago. When an animal or plant dies, it usually decays or another animal eats it. But sometimes parts of an animal are buried before either of these things can happen. Then, the remains of the animal are preserved as fossils.

To be considered a fossil, remains need to be at least 10,000 years old. The oldest fossils are more than 3 billion years old! Fossils have been discovered all over the world in people's backyards, in deserts, and beneath the sea.

Sometimes scientists find fossils of plants and animals that no longer exist on Earth. These fossils help us learn about life on Earth long, long ago.



Kinds of Fossils

There are two kinds of fossils. *Body fossils* are the remains of a plant or animal that was once living. Some of these fossils are whole animals. But more often, fossils contain animal remains such as bones and teeth. Because these body parts are hard, they do not decay as quickly as soft parts like muscle.

Trace fossils are fossils that do not contain remains of a plant or animal. Instead, they show signs, such as footprints or leaf impressions, that an animal or a plant was once there.

body fossil ▼



trace fossils ▼

