Fossil Adaptations

Stay at Home Field Study!

Medina County Park District

In this field study, we learn that all living things need:

Food

Water

Shelter

Space

An animal must be able to find food, water, shelter, and space within its habitat or home. If an animal cannot find what it needs, it may **move** to a new habitat. An animal may also **adapt** or become able to live in a different way within its habitat that will allow it to survive. An example of adaptation is an animal learning to find water from water droplets on plants rather than from a pond. If an animal is unable to **move** or **adapt**, it may die.

<u>Fossil Adaptations Activities</u>

Follow along for activities that you can do in your own home or backyard to learn about fossil adaptations.

Guessing Game

These prehistoric animals are no longer able to survive in their habitats. Read each story. Guess whether each animal moves, adapts, or dies by writing the answer on each line. Check the answer key.

1. Woolly mammoths are covered with thick fur to keep them warm. At the end of the Ice Age, temperatures warm up, and the mammoths travel north. _____
2. Short-faced bears eat wild horses and antelope. A drought dries up the grasses, and the horses and antelope leave. All of the bears' food sources leave, but the bears stay to be near the caves they use for winter. _____
3. Giant centipedes dwell in the swamp forest living under logs and eating smaller insects. Some other large insects move into the area, bringing with them a fungus that makes the centipedes ill. Many of the centipedes die, but those that survive develop a resistance to the fungus. _____
4. Dunkleosteous are large, shark-eating fish that live in the ocean. As the oceans over Ohio begin to dry up, the dunks follow the water elsewhere. _____
5. Saber-toothed cats use their long teeth to hunt large prey. At the end of the Ice Age, big animals become smaller or die. Saber-tooth cats are unable to catch smaller animals with their large teeth.

_____

Answer Key: 1. Move 2. Die 3. Adapt 4. Move 5. Die

How Fossils are Made

Fossils can be formed from plants or animals. They can be tracks or impressions; part of the plant or animal; or, sometimes, the entire organism. Fossils can be found in ice, amber (tree sap), and commonly in sedimentary rock.

If only part of the plant or animal is fossilized, then it likely formed after the animal died. After the plant or animal dies, it slowly gets covered with layers upon layers of dirt, sand, and other particles. Over time, these layers get very heavy and begin to push down until a rock is formed with the fossil trapped inside. It is hard to make and preserve a fossil though. Earthquakes, tsunamis, waves, and volcanoes can all destroy fossils. It is even possible for the plant or animal to be eaten by something else before it gets a chance to become a fossil. Fossilization is hard!

Make Your Own Fossil

Salt dough is similar to the ocean floor. It is salty, soft, and pliable. With an adult's help, make this recipe: https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/240641/salt-dough/. Before baking, press your thumb in the dough to make a track. Press a plastic toy into the dough to leave an impression. Remove your thumb and toy before baking. While the dough is baking, imagine that there is a lot of pressure in the **hot** oven. After a **very** long time, your dough will be baked and a fossil will be formed. Do not eat your fossil. Be sure to let your fossil cool before touching.

Draw a picture of your fossil here:

Take a Fossil Walk

Go outside to search for rocks and pebbles. Good places to search include: playsets, flower beds, gardens, patios, and driveways. Look for rocks that aren't shiny or very colorful. Look closely to see if any small fossils are inside. Many of the fossils found in Northeast Ohio are ocean creatures.

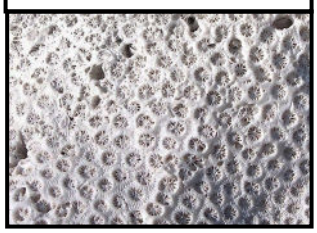
Describe your fossil findings:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Crinoid Fossil

Coral Fossil