



little bugs club



Paleontology

Studying Ancient Animals

Millions of years ago, the earth was a very different place. Instead of multiple continents, there was only one land mass called Pangea. This super continent was home to the dinosaurs. Paleontologists, or scientists that study ancient life, have helped us to uncover the mysterious past about what these creatures were and why they disappeared.



Triassic Period

Dinosaurs first appeared during the Triassic Period around 245 million years ago. Most dinosaurs were herbivores, with carnivores only making up 40% of the species. Some dinosaurs lived alone while others traveled in herds. Scientists have discovered fossilized nesting areas which suggests that some herds may have returned to the same spot every year to raise their young.



First in Flight

Pterosaurs, whose name means "winged lizard" in Greek, were the first animals to fly. With over 200 different species, these creatures ruled the skies during the Mesozoic era. Some were even as big as jets! However, being so large could be difficult. By studying the fossils of one of the largest Pterosaurs, nicknamed Dracula, scientists have concluded that it probably could not fly.



Giants of the Sea

20 million years before the arrival of the dinosaurs, marine reptiles, named Ichthyosaurs, ruled the deep. These ancient marine predators were at the top of the food chain; swimming at speeds up to 22 miles per hour (dolphins can swim up to 18 miles per hour). These creatures also had the largest eyes ever recorded, with some that were over 10 inches wide.



Fossils

Dinosaurs went extinct around 65 million years ago. Though the cause of this mass extinction remains unknown, the widely accepted theory is that a giant asteroid hit the earth. So how do we know about dinosaurs? Scientists have studied fossils that were formed over thousands of years. If an animal died and was covered in lava, tar, or layers of sand, its bones could be preserved. Over time, the remains of the animal were replaced by minerals, and the bones turned to rock.

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Take a look below for a fun fossil craft!



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Create your own ice fossils!

Archaeology is the study of ancient cultures and species through the use of artifacts or physical remains. Archaeologists study fossils to learn about the history and lifestyles of dinosaurs. Fossils can be found all over the world including icy places like Antarctica. Follow these instructions to make your own ice fossils and be an arctic scientists for the day!

Paleontology

Materials Needed:

- Small dinosaur toys
- Water
- Bowls
- A freezer
- Tools (like a spoon, a butter knife, rocks, or sticks)

Instructions:

- Fill the bowl half way with water and place in the freezer for about an hour
- Place the toy on top of the nearly-frozen water and fill up the rest of the bowl with water
- Freeze for 3-4 hours
- Take your frozen fossil outside and use your tools to free the dinosaur!

