

How do we know all we know about dinosaurs?

Dinosaurs lived millions of years ago and died out long before the first humans set foot on Earth. So how do we know so much about them?

Scientists who investigate dinosaurs are called palaeontologists. These palaeontologists dig up and study fossils—the remains left behind by creatures and plants long extinct. As the parts of an animal usually decay, they leave behind impressions that can tell us about the creatures that lived on Earth before us. Some of the hard parts, like bones or teeth, are sometimes replaced by minerals that harden into rock—like many of the dinosaur fossils you see in museums today!



Fossils aren't just bones—palaeontologists have also found fossilized footprints, eggs, skin impressions, and even dung.

Places where fossils have been found

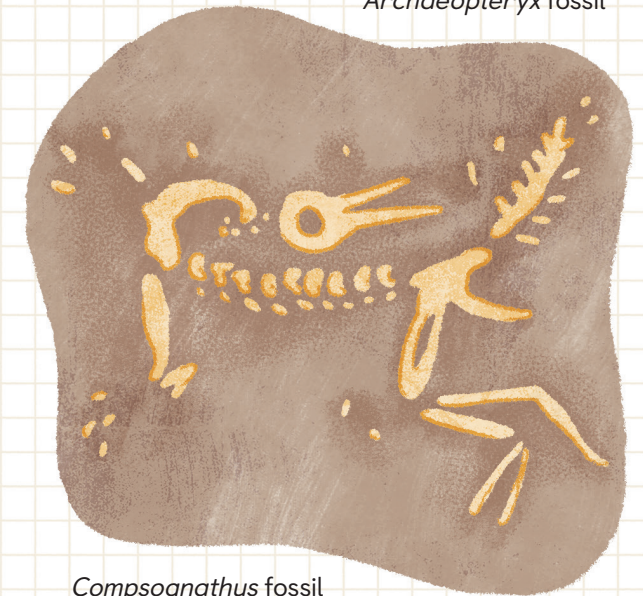
One of the most famous fossil sites in the world is the Hell Creek Formation in North America, where hundreds of dinosaur fossils have been unearthed, including of *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Triceratops*, alongside mammals, prehistoric turtles, plants, pterosaurs, and more. There have been fossils unearthed all over the globe, telling us what the world looked like in days past. There have even been marine fossils discovered at the top of Mount Everest!

In the later part of the nineteenth century, a bitter rivalry raged between two palaeontologists in North America, who battled to uncover the most and best fossils. They would sabotage each other's digs and even destroy bones to one-up each other. This period was known as the Bone Wars.

Palaeontologists have to be extremely careful when they excavate fossils, to make sure they don't damage anything. These excavations can take months at a time.



Archaeopteryx fossil



Compsognathus fossil



Protoceratops
and *Velociraptor* fossils