



History Along NEBRASKA'S BYWAYS

Fossil Beds

Activity Summary

Your students will experience firsthand how a fossil is made.

Discussion Topics

- What fossils are
- The kinds of things that can make fossils
- Where fossils are found
- The state fossil

List of Supplies

- Shoe boxes or facial tissue boxes (1 per student)
- Pottery plaster (approximately 2 cups per student)
- Damp sand (approximately 3–4 cups per student)
- Shells, wood bark, twigs, pine cones, arrowheads, rocks, real or artificial leaves, artificial bones, small toys, etc., to be cast
- 1-cup measuring cups
- Bowls or plastic containers (1 per pair of students)
- Large plastic spoons (1 per pair of students)
- Water
- 1" paint brushes

Activity Directions

1. Remove the lid of the shoe box or cut off the top of the facial tissue box.
2. Fill the box with about 2" of damp sand and pack it down.
3. Select items to be cast and push them into the sand with enough force to make a good imprint.
4. Remove the items, being careful not to disturb the imprints.
5. Working with a partner, mix the plaster. Use 2 cups of water and 4 cups of dry pottery plaster. The plaster mix should be the consistency of pancake batter. It is important that this step is done quickly, as the plaster will begin to thicken almost immediately.
6. Pour a layer of plaster mix into each box, working from one end of the box to the other.
7. Let the plaster dry completely. It will be ready to remove in approximately 24 hours.
8. Tear the sides from the box and remove the plaster from the sand.
9. Remove sand from the plaster using a paint brush.

