

Fossil hunting is an exciting hobby that promotes getting outdoors, discovering your surroundings, and involving oneself in our ever increasing understanding of the history of life on our planet. It is a hobby that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and backgrounds. This brochure will present an overview of fossil hunting in the state of Virginia and associated information and resources.

### *What do I need to get started?*

To get started fossil hunting, you will need the following equipment: a rock hammer, a hand lens, and protective gear such as safety glasses, steel-toed boots, etc.

The rock hammer will let you split apart any rocks that may contain fossils. A hand lens will allow you to examine small fossils for possible identification. Protective gear will minimize risk of injury during your expeditions. All of this equipment can be acquired through local hardware stores, rock shops, scientific supply companies, or online.

Other useful equipment includes: a backpack to carry tools, supplies, and specimens; paper or plastic bags to hold collected fossils; a notebook for keeping notes about where you found fossils; and a map and/or compass to help you stay on track and mark locations you have visited.

### *Where should I look for fossils?*

Use maps of local geology or public information to find places to look for fossils. Once you've found an area you want to check out, be sure to POSE – Plan, Organize, Setup, & Execute. Plan what you'll need and what you're looking for. Organize your supplies and gear. Setup your gear to be either mobile or at a base camp. Finally execute your plan and see what you find. Remember to keep an eye out for fossils either in place in the earth (in situ) or in weathered areas where pieces of rock collect like small gullies and slope channels formed by rain wash and you may find something amazing!



*Assorted fossils in limestone*

If you'd rather not hunt down your own location, you can even go fossil hunting in our very own state parks. Three excellent choices for find a wide variety of fossils are Chippokes State Park, Westmoreland State Park, and York River State Park. These parks

have their own individual rules for fossil hunting so please check with them before collecting!

### *Where can I learn more about fossils in Virginia?*

You can learn more about Virginia fossils either through the Virginia Museum of Natural History, local clubs or universities, various online resources like those put together by our own fossil hunters in our Web Store (see back)!

### *Any more tips?*

- Know whose land you are on and have permission before collecting anything
- Check the weather before going fossil collecting
- Let someone know where you will be and when you will be back.
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Pack plenty of food and water
- Protect yourself against the sun
- Respect the land and those that use it

Thank you for reading our brochure and we wish you luck in your search for fossils. Happy hunting!

## What is in the Web Store?

All of our geology and mineral resource products are published and available for free download or purchase.



You may visit our Web Store at

<https://www.energy.virginia.gov/commerce/>



*Bivalve fossils are very common in Virginia*



*Geology and Mineral Resources Program Main Office*

Learn more at our website here:

<https://energy.virginia.gov/geology/VirginiaFossils.shtml>



*Dinosaur trackway at the Culpeper quarry*

*For additional information about Geology and Mineral Resources Data Preservation project, please contact Chrissi Wood-Smith at (434) 987-3507.*



## Fossil Hunting in Virginia

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