

# Type Specimens and the Oldest Fossils

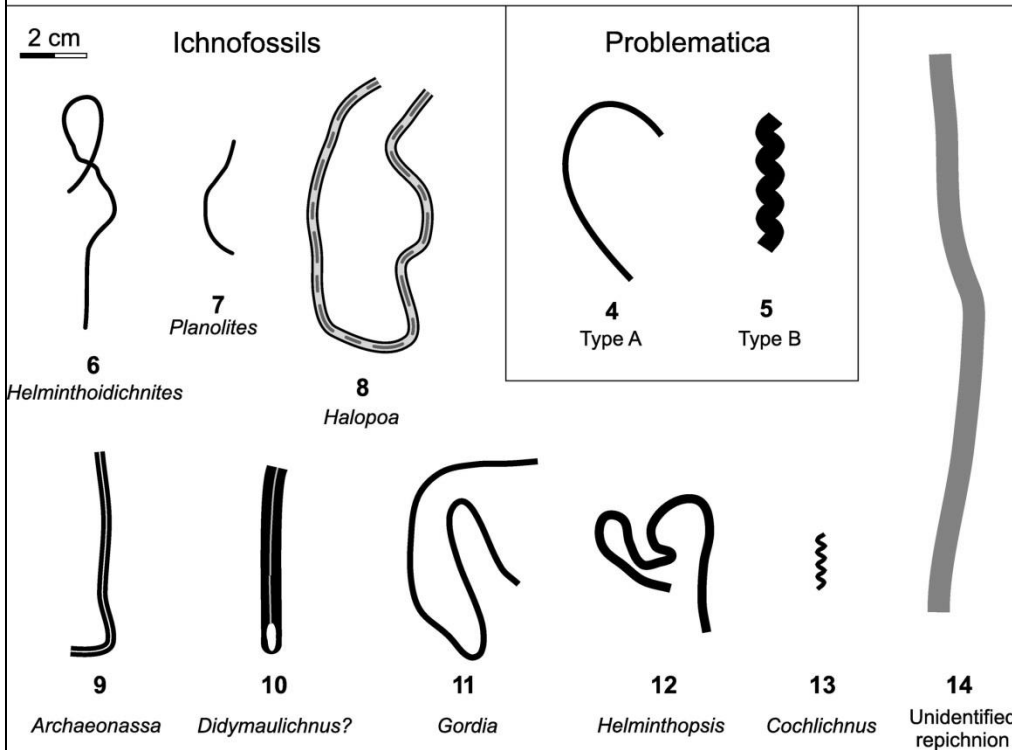
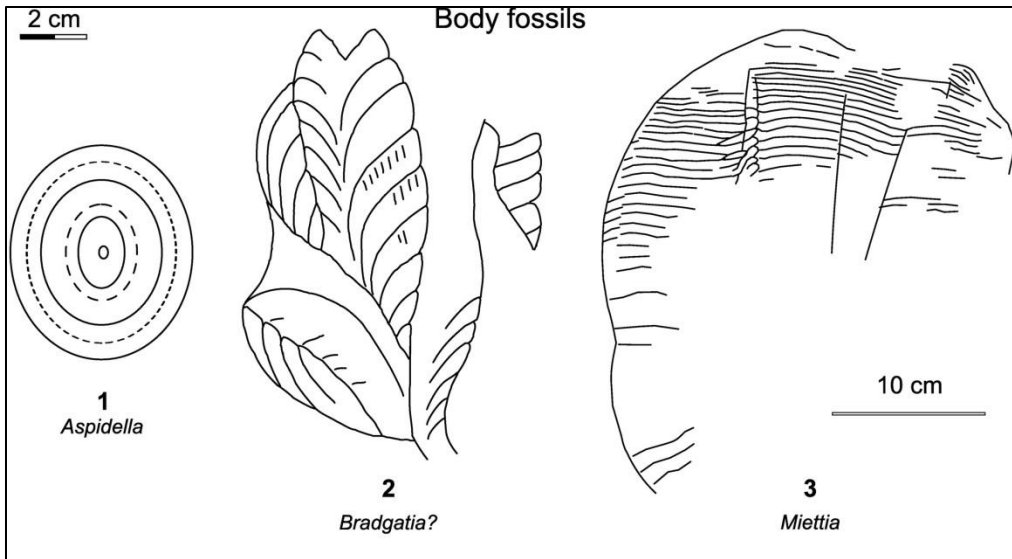
By Marji Johns, Paleontology Collections Manager and Researcher (Retired)

All the Royal BC Museum's oldest fossils are type and figured specimens. A type specimen is special. It is the one a scientist uses to identify and describe a new life form or species. A figured specimen is one that is illustrated and discussed in a scientific publication or other published article.

The Ediacaran fossils, the oldest fossils in the Royal BC Museum collection, have been written about and illustrated in this way by the paleontologists who found and named them. At the Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences website, you can read the scientific article about these fossils, written by Hans J. Hofmann and Eric W. Mountjoy, [Ediacaran Body and Trace Fossils in Miette Group \(Windermere Supergroup\) near Salient Mountain, British Columbia, Canada](#).

This article is written by scientists for other scientists. Much of it may make little sense to you, but scroll down the page to Figure 3. Here you will find line drawings of the fossils that Hofmann and Mountjoy found at Salient Mountain near Mt. Robson.

All these illustrated fossils are now within the Royal BC Museum collection, because all type specimens must eventually be held in a suitable and secure location such as a museum. That is one of the important roles the Royal BC Museum plays. Examine images of these fossils in the Learning Portal.



Illustrations of type specimens from Hofmann and Moutjoy's important article. Can you match the line drawings here with photographs of the fossils in the Learning Portal?

Credit: *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences*, Written by Hans J. Hofmann and Eric W. Moutjoy. Ediacaran Body and Trace Fossils in Miette Group (Windermere Supergroup) near Salient Mountain, British Columbia, Canada. Volume 47, Number 10, October 2010, pages 1305-1325 © Canadian Science Publishing or its licensors.