

Gathering the Past

Collecting and Donating Fossils

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In British Columbia, fossils are considered heritage items. When found on Crown land, they belong to the province. But you're allowed to collect fossils on the ground when they might otherwise be destroyed by weather, erosion, streams, oceans, etc.

Being a good fossil steward is important. Knowledge and experience about fossil collecting can be gained by working with a paleontologist or geologist, reading and reviewing literature, joining a paleontology society or going on field trips with experts.

When collecting fossils, it's very important to record as much information as you can. A fossil without information attached has no scientific value. Make a label that documents where the fossil was found (site location and position in the rocks), when it was found, and who it was collected by. You can also document other fossils that were spotted nearby and the type of rocks in which the fossil was discovered. A good photograph of the site and fossil (before and after it was collected) are excellent additions to your data collecting.

Sharing your fossil find and data with experts or others can be very rewarding. You may learn more about the fossil and its significance. If it is rare or unusual, it is important to donate it to a museum or research institution so that it can be studied. You will be acknowledged as the donor, meaning your name will be kept in the records, and if it is a superior specimen and identified as new, scientists may decide to name the fossil itself after you or your family — this is a great honour.



A rare coracoid bone of a 25 million year old diving water bird, *Stemec suntokum* Kaiser et al. 2015, from the west coast of Vancouver Island. The fossil was named after the family that found it.

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Fossil Label	
Fossil name:	_____
Collector:	_____
Date collected:	_____
Nearest city/villa:	_____
Location Description:	_____
Geological age:	_____
Fossil bed position:	_____
Field No.:	_____
Notes:	_____
Photo #s:	_____
