



Museum of Natural History

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Vocabulary for Fossils: Evidence of Past Life guided program and the Fossils: Clues to the Past workshop

These are words that are commonly used in both the guided program and the workshop. Following the definition for most of the vocabulary words, we have included a sentence that incorporates the word.

- Adapted - one of the basic phenomena of biology; the process whereby an organism becomes better suited to its habitat.
 - Plants with smooth-edged leaves are better adapted to warmer climates.
- Characteristics - Features that can be used to identify or distinguish between different things.
 - The shape of the leaves is one characteristic used to identify a plant.
- Classification – a way of arranging things into groups.
 - The scientists used a classification that grouped fossils by whether they lived in water or on land.
- Evidence – everything that is used to prove something.
 - The class examined the evidence to determine what the organism ate.
- Fossil – evidence of past life.
 - Fossil leaves provide information about what the climate was like millions of years ago.

- Paleontology – the study of fossils and all aspects of prehistoric life, including their evolution, ecology, and the rocks in which they are found.
 - Julie always loved fossils and wanted to study paleontology when she went to college.
- Petrified – turned to stone.
 - Petrified wood is an exact stone copy of part of a tree, the hard parts of which have been replaced by minerals.
- Preservation – kept from destruction or decay.
 - Teeth are preserved better than any other body part.
- Sediment – material that settles to the bottom of a liquid.
 - The mud that washed down the hillside during the storm formed a layer of sediment on the bottom of the lake.
- Trace fossil – Trace fossils (also called ichnofossils) are the evidence of animal's activity. Trace fossils are disturbances in the earth from an animal's (or plant's) activity such as resting, locomotion, or feeding.
 - Footprints, scat, and burrows are all examples of trace fossils left behind by animals.