

Lab & Collections



Watch Preparation Of New Discoveries

Our fossil laboratory is situated at the back of the paleontology exhibit hall. Here we remove the rock surrounding fossils, glue broken pieces back together again, or make rubber molds and casts.

Fossil preparation usually involves removing rock using simple hand tools like dentist's

picks and toothbrushes, but occasionally we use vibrating air chisels powered by compressed air. Fossils are hardened by acetone-based plastic preservatives, epoxy resins and glues.

The laboratory has a sliding window that opens into the exhibit gallery, allowing museum visitors to talk directly to people working in the lab.

Volunteer In The Lab Or Collections!

We need your help cleaning up our dinosaur bones! If you are interested in dinosaurs and want to get involved, then why not volunteer in our laboratory or collections?

Projects

Our available projects vary depending on what our fieldwork has recently uncovered, and your personal interest and ability.



Projects range from simple scrubbing away of mud with a toothbrush, to fine preparation of delicate fossils using more technical tools. For people who don't like getting their hands dirty, we have many dinosaur bone "jigsaws" - broken specimens that need to be pieced back together by a jigsaw fanatic!

It takes a lot of practice and especially patience to become skilled in fossil preparation. New volunteers are assigned a relatively simple first project, with following projects that are more complex, introducing new skills, equipment, or techniques.

We also now have the possibility to volunteer in our collections (where you don't have to get your hands dirty!). This involves getting clean dinosaur fossils ready to be stored safely in their drawers.

General requirements

Volunteers should be age 15 or over, and need to be mature and able to work independently in a lab setting. We prefer that individual shifts are at least 2 hours, although exceptions can be made, especially for younger volunteers.



Contact

If you are interested in volunteering then email curator [Denver.fowler \[at\] dickinsongov.com](mailto:Denver.fowler@dickinsongov.com) and preparator [Steven.Clawson \[at\] dickinsongov.com](mailto:Steven.Clawson@dickinsongov.com), or collections manager [amanda.hendrix \[at\] dickinsongov.com](mailto:amanda.hendrix@dickinsongov.com), call 701-456-6225 (museum front desk), or drop by the museum.

Paleontology Collections



Our collections spaces are undergoing major renovations and upgrades and we recently acquired federal repository status. Collections are divided into research, teaching, and the historical 'League Collection'.

Research Collection

Our research collection comprises fossils collected since 2016, mainly fossil vertebrates from the Cretaceous period of the US Western Interior.

Teaching Collection

Our teaching collection comprises thousands of common invertebrate and vertebrate fossils.

The collection is used for education both at the museum, and for teaching geology classes at Dickinson State University. We also consider short-term loan requests from local educators who would like to borrow specimens to teach a class.

The League Collection

Over a hundred thousand specimens of fossils and minerals from all over the world. Most of the finest specimens are on display in the main exhibit halls. The League Collection also includes seven skulls of the primitive rhino *Subhyracodon* which were collected from the Brule Formation exposures in the Little Badlands, ~10 miles south of Dickinson.