

Collecting Rocks, Meteorites, Artifacts, and Fossils On Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands

ROCKS AND AGATES

Rock hunting (surface collection of rocks and agates, excluding meteorites and fossils), for personal, hobby, and noncommercial use only, is allowed without a permit. Hobby collectors are recommended to remove 25 pounds of rock per day up to 250 pounds per year. For other uses of rock material, such as landscaping or rock gardening, *etc.* contact the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands Supervisor's Office 308-432-0300 because a permit may be required. Selling rocks and agates collected from the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands is not allowed.



METEORITES

Meteorite is a stony or metallic object from interplanetary space that has fallen to the earth's surface. The collection of meteorites for personal, hobby, educational, and noncommercial use requires a permit. Selling of meteorites is not allowed.

ARTIFACTS

Archeological resource means any material remains of prehistoric or historic human life or activities, which are at least 50 years old, and includes the physical site, location, or context in which they are found (36 CFR 261.2). The collection of projectile points, pottery, or any other archeological resource or artifact is not allowed (36 CFR 261.9 (h)) without a permit. Projectile points include 'arrowheads' and any prehistoric human-modified stone. Selling of artifacts from Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands is not allowed.



FOSSILS

Fossil (Paleontological) resource means any evidence of fossilized remains of multicellular invertebrate and vertebrate animals and multicellular plants, including imprints thereof (36 CFR 261.2). There are four major types of fossils: **ichnofossil** (a.k.a. imprint or trace fossil), **plant**, **invertebrate**, and **vertebrate**.

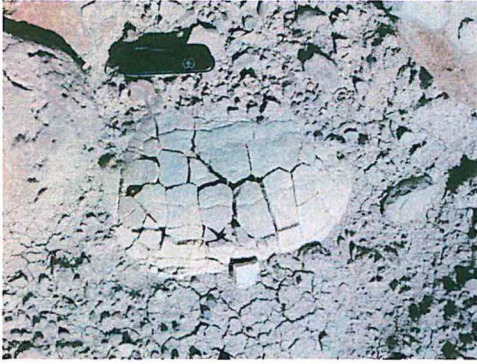


Ichnofossils (or trace fossils) are typically sedimentary structures consisting of a fossilized track, trail, burrow, or tube, resulting from life activities and behavior of an animal, such as a mark made by a worm creeping, feeding, hiding, or resting on or in soft sediment, or a rhino track. Some non-sedimentary examples include tooth marks (resulting from predation), skin impressions, and coprolites (fossil dung).

Fossil plants are the fossilized remains of all parts of a plant. **Petrified wood** is a common term used for wood fossilized by silica, where the woody structure is visible. A permit is not required to collect petrified wood for personal, hobby, and noncommercial use. Fossilized trees, fossilized tree limbs, and leaves are rare on the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands. A permit may be required to remove petrified wood, tree/limbs from the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands for non-personal, scientific, and commercial purposes, check with the Minerals and Geology Program Manager on the Nebraska National Forest. A permit is required for research.

Invertebrate fossils are the fossilized remains of animals lacking a backbone. A few examples include: ammonites, trilobites, snails, clams, and insects. Invertebrate and plant fossils (including invertebrate and plant trace fossils) may be collected without a permit, from the surface without digging, for personal, hobby, educational, and noncommercial use only. A permit is required for research.

Vertebrate fossils are the fossilized remains of any animal having a bony skeleton or backbone such as: fish (includes sharks), amphibians, reptiles (including dinosaurs, mosasaurs, and turtles), birds, mammals, and all trace fossils from vertebrate animals, such as dinosaur tracks and eggs.



The collection and/or duplication of any vertebrate fossil, including vertebrate trace fossils, from the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands requires a permit (36 CFR 261.9 (i)). Permits are issued to qualified paleontologists, who curate fossils and their duplicates into federally approved facilities.

No permits for the collection of any fossils (plants, invertebrates, vertebrates, or any trace fossils) are issued for commercial purposes, except for petrified wood, which is managed under the Minerals Materials Act. Selling any fossil material (plants, invertebrates, vertebrates, or any trace fossils) removed from the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands is prohibited.

Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2009

New law for paleontological resources was signed by President Obama in March 2009; Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (PRPA). Members from the Department of Interior (BLM and NPS) and Department of Agriculture (USFS) are working together toward having the same regulations where possible.

PRPA allows for casual collecting without a permit, common invertebrate and plant fossils may be casually collected in reasonable amounts with non powered hand tools, with negligible disturbance to the ground surface.

PRPA does sever government ownership of fossils collected under the casual collecting exemption. However, collection of fossils for other purposes under the guise of casual collection is illegal.

PRPA dictates that fossils from United States Forest Service lands may not be sold.

All lands managed by the United States Forest Service are considered open for casual collection; unless designated as closed.

The Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands staff administers six Paleontological Special Interest Areas (SIAs) that are closed to casual collection. These SIAs are designated for research and are located on the Fall River Ranger District of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland in South Dakota and on the Pine Ridge Ranger District, Oglala National Grassland in Nebraska.