

Trammel Fossil Park

This unique 10-acre park has been made possible by the kind, thoughtful generosity of the Trammel Family. Mr. Trammel chose not to develop this site because he recognized the geological importance of this hillside and instead donated it to The City of Sharonville. Urbanization and development of all sorts have made access to hillside exposures of our rocks very rare. Rarer yet are individuals who have the foresight to forego further site development in order to give a gift dedicated to the education and enjoyment of the people of the Cincinnati area and their friends.

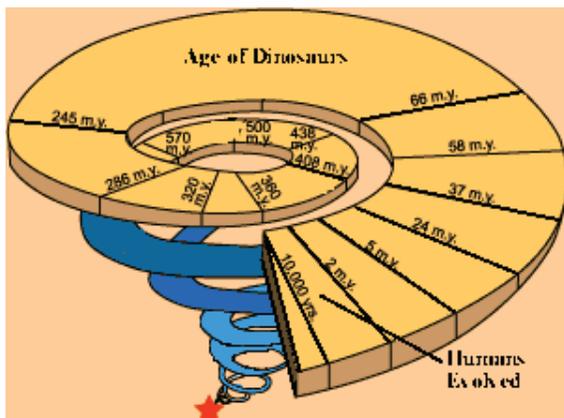


A Window Into a Distant Past

Paleontologists (scientists who study ancient life through fossils) have used this superb site for years because the layers of rock hold a scientific treasure of fossils. As you can see, there are layers of soft, grayish-blue rock called shale mixed in with harder, tannish-yellow rocks called limestone. Shales come mostly from clay eroding from an ancient and distant land area. The limestone was formed from the skeletons of animals that lived in the seas that covered this area 440 million years ago. The rocks you see before you hold important clues to what life was like way back then. In fact, the rocks of our area are so important that geologists call these layers where they are found all over the world the Cincinnati Series.

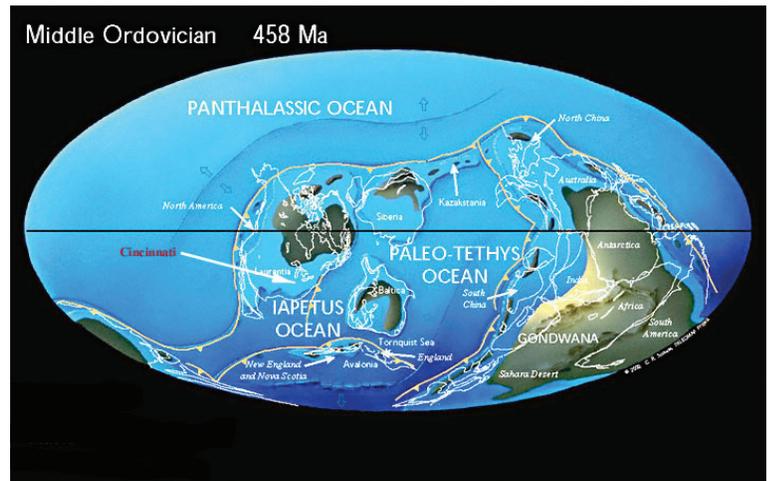
Timeline of Geologic History

Our Earth is 4.6 billion years old. About 3.8 billion years ago life began as single cells in the seas that covered the planet. But it wasn't until about 540 million years ago that life "exploded" into a multitude of forms that eventually evolved into all the plants and animals that we know today. Our Cincinnati rocks contain some of the oldest of these forms...there were no amphibians, reptiles, dinosaurs, mammals and certainly no humans at the time these rocks were formed!



Ordovician Period

By about 440 million years ago, life was pretty much still restricted to the seas although primitive forms of algae may have advanced onto the edges of the land. This was a time geologists called the Late Ordovician. Primitive fish swam in some parts of this sea but not here in the Cincinnati area. Due to plate movements, our region lay about 2,000 miles south of the equator. The Late Ordovician lasted about 10 million years. We only see about 2 million years here at Trammel Park.



Looking at the Layers

The bottom layers that you see were deposited first, the top layers last. These layers represent about two million years of time. Geologists have found evidence of global changes in these layers and group the layers into what they call formations. We see four formations here: The lowest is the Fairview which is overlain by the Miamitown Shale, the Bellevue and on top of them all is the Corryville.

Please visit the four outer panels of this kiosk to learn more about each formation, the stories told by these ancient rocks and the fossils you can find here. By following the signs leading from each, you can see the layers and their fossils up close.

Visiting the Park

You are allowed to collect fossils here but we ask that you only take a representative sample and leave specimens for others to see and collect. Please do not dig into the slope; hand tools only. Holes can present a safety hazard to others. Fossils are best found as they wash out after rain. Take care when climbing the slopes, especially when they are wet -- the clay can be very slippery.



This primitive park is meant for visitors to enjoy its natural beauty and the education that can come with it. Trash cans and picnic tables are available year round. Restrooms are available beginning April 1 through September 30.

Reservations are not needed to enjoy the park, and the park is open to all visitors. Small group field trips are encouraged but please be prepared in advance for what is and is not offered at the park to make sure that it will work for your group.

The Recreation Department has partnered with The University of Cincinnati as well as the local Dry Dredgers group (drydredgers.com) for continued care and educational opportunities at the park. Visit the Sharonville Parks & Recreation Department Facebook page for information and updates on things happening at Trammel Fossil Park and other parks & facilities around Sharonville.

Park Signage

Following the signage closely at the park can offer clues and educational insights about each formation and the fossils you may uncover.

Fairview Formation

[Fossils Found: Bryozoans, Brachiopods, Crinoids, Gastropods]

Named after hillsides exposed at Fairview Heights in Cincinnati, the limestone layers of the Fairview typically range from 7 to 15 inches in thickness. The tops and bottoms of these layers are in soft shales and thus provide easily worked slabs that were used for building stones. You will see ripple marks – caused by water moving across the surface of the sea – forever frozen in time. In some places you can see holes in the rocks that were probably made by worms burrowing into what was then mud.

During the time the Fairview Formation was forming, the seas went from fairly clear to very cloudy with silt (which became shale). The alternating beds of limestones and shales are puzzling to geologists. Some believe that storms were a factor or perhaps changes in sea level. In any event by the end of Fairview time the seas became very clouded with mud.

Miamitown Shale Formation

[Fossils Found: Brachiopods, Gastropods, Pelecypods, Edriosteroids]

As the seas became more clouded with mud, the particles settled out to form muds that, over time, became shale. The formation sitting on top of the Fairview Formation is called the Miamitown Shale, named after rocks first studied near Miamitown in western Hamilton County. You probably wouldn't have wanted to SCUBA dive in the seas at this time...visibility would be very bad indeed!

Things were changing again so that, by the end of Miamitown time, the seas once again had clear water. Geologists think that the seas were becoming more shallow and that the muds were being stirred up and carried away elsewhere.

Bellevue Formation

[Fossils Found: Bryozoans, Brachiopods]

The Bellevue Formation was named for the rocks first studied around Bellevue, Kentucky, just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. These rocks are recognized by the much closer layering of limestones indicating a shallower, more stirred up sea at the time of formation. Bellevue layers have a rippled appearance and there are plenty of fossils indicating a great environment for all kinds of animals.

Once again the environment changed and the water of the sea became cloudy once again as sediment eroded off the landmass to the north and east setting the stage for the last formation we see here.

Corryville Formation

[Fossils Found: Bryozoans, Brachiopods,

The Corryville Formation is named for the Corryville area of Cincinnati near the University of Cincinnati. Fine particles settling out of the seas formed the shale layers you see in the Corryville Formation. These fine particles resulted from erosion and runoff from the land to the north and east of this region. Despite the cloudiness of the sea water a great number of animals thrived on the sea bottom leaving their skeletons which we find here today.

After the time when the sediments formed the Corryville, things again got clearer in the sea but those layers are found elsewhere in the Cincinnati area. Erosion over the many millions of years has eroded those layers from this site so our story here at the Trammel Fossil Park ends. What is so clearly shown by the layers you see here is that global change has affected the Earth during the Late Ordovician. The rocks and fossils you see here provide evidence of a world long past that contrasts greatly with present day Ohio.