



Geologic Wonders of Texas

Dinosaur Tracks Activity 2

Collecting tracks

If you find a dinosaur track, do not collect it without a specialist's help! Tracks are difficult to collect and are of greatest value to science in their original location. Professionals do not recommend making casts of tracks in limestone without experience.

However, it is fun to practice making and collecting casts of modern animals' tracks that you find in soft mud. Carry supplies with you when you are in the woods, at a creek or river, or at the lakeshore. You will start to recognize the kinds of places where you might find tracks and will be prepared to collect them.

Materials needed:

Plaster of paris, water in a bottle, small disposable container for mixing the water and plaster of paris, strips of stiff paper or folded aluminum foil, and several paper clips.

Procedure:

1. When you find a track in the mud, take the strips of paper or aluminum foil and make a ring around the track (with the paper or foil standing upright). Use paperclips to join ends of strips. Gently push the ring into the mud just a little bit.
2. Mix plaster of paris with water in the mixing container to form a thick mixture. Carefully pour the plaster into the ring and let it set up for about 20 minutes. When the plaster is firm, pick up the cast and turn it over to examine it. Scratch the date into the back of the cast. Let the plaster finish hardening. Wash off any mud that has stuck to the cast.