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EARTH SCIENCE EDUCATION

LIFE IN ANCIENT OHIO

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Series 1



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Isotelus maximus
Trilobite

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Stereoaster squamosus
Crinoid

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Onychodus sp.
Lobe-finned fish

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Aganides sciotoensis
Cephalopod

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Arthropleura sp.
Giant millipede

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Dimetrodon sp.
Early synapsid

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Mammut americanum
American mastodon

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Onychodus sp.
Extinct lobe-finned fish

o-NIK-uh-duss

Onychodus was a predatory fish that captured its prey with large, pointed teeth arranged in a pair of whorls. Ohio fossils are primarily teeth, jaws, and scales.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Middle to Late Devonian,
~395–360 million
years old

HABITAT: Marine

SIZE

Up to ~6 feet long

ABILITY

Could retract
whorls of teeth

THINK: What modern fishes have teeth shaped like those of *Onychodus*?

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Stereoaster squamosus
Extinct echinoderm

STAIR-ee-o-A-stur
skwuh-MO-suss

Stereoaster squamosus was a crinoid that lived anchored to the seafloor, often in groups. Crinoids (“sea lilies”) resemble plants but are animals related to sea stars.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Early Silurian,
~440 million years old

HABITAT:
Marine

SIZE

~13 inches long
(stem)

ABILITY

Used arms to capture
food particles

THINK: Where do crinoids live in modern oceans?

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Isotelus maximus
Extinct arthropod

eye-so-TEE-luss
MAK-suh-muss

Isotelus, a fossil genus of trilobites, is Ohio's State Invertebrate Fossil. It lived in marine environments not found in Ohio today and molted its exoskeleton as it grew.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Late Ordovician,
~450 million years old

HABITAT:
Shallow marine

SIZE

Up to ~20
inches long

ABILITY

Could roll into a ball
for protection

THINK: What modern-day animals can roll into a ball like *Isotelus*?

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Mammut americanum
Extinct proboscidean

mam-MOOT
uh-MAIR-uh-KAH-num

Mastodons, herbivores with gently curved tusks, were related to extinct mammoths and modern elephants. Mastodon bones have been found throughout Ohio.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Quaternary,
~2.5 million–10,000
years old

HABITAT: Woodlands

SIZE

Up to ~10 feet tall
and 6 tons

ABILITY

Could eat woody
plants using molars

THINK: What do you think caused mastodons to become extinct?

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Dimetrodon sp.
Extinct early synapsid

dye-MEH-truh-dahn

Dimetrodon was related to early mammals. It was a top predator with small and large specialized teeth and had a large “sail” on its back. Ohio fossils are not abundant.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Early Permian,
~295 million years old

HABITAT:
Coastal-plain wetlands

SIZE

Up to ~10 feet long

ABILITY

Used its teeth to
stab and slice prey

THINK: How do you think *Dimetrodon* used its sail?

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Arthropleura sp.
Extinct arthropod

ar-thruh-PLOOR-uh

Arthropleura, a fossil genus of giant millipedes, was among the largest land invertebrates of all time. Fully grown *Arthropleura* likely had few predators.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Late Pennsylvanian,
~305 million years old

HABITAT:
Tropical terrestrial

SIZE

Up to ~6 feet long

ABILITY

Grew with each
exoskeleton molt

THINK: How do you size up to *Arthropleura*?

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Aganides sciotoensis
Extinct mollusk

a-guh-NY-deez
sy-O-tuh-EN(T)-siss

Aganides sciotoensis was a marine cephalopod with a hard external shell, like the modern *Nautilus*. Like most cephalopods, *Aganides* was likely a predator.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Early Mississippian,
~355 million years old

HABITAT:
Marine

SIZE

Shells up to
~3 inches wide

ABILITY

Used shell to
control buoyancy

THINK: How might scientists envision an extinct animal's color pattern?

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Megalograptus ohioensis

Sea scorpion



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Anartiocystis foerstei

Rhombiferan



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Eldredgeops milleri

Trilobite



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Paraconularia subulata

Conulariid

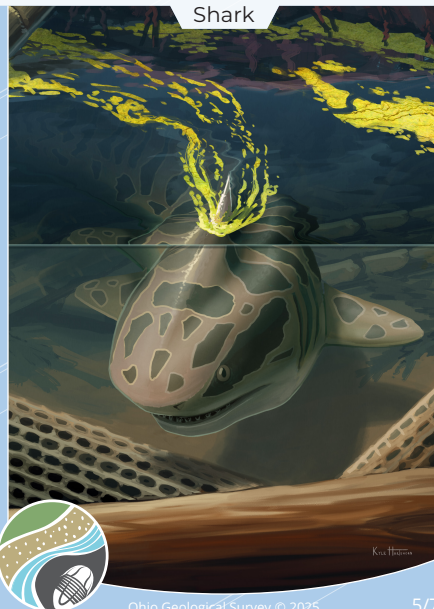


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Orthacanthus compressus

Shark



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Diploceraspis burkei

Amphibious tetrapod



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Megalonyx jeffersonii

Giant ground sloth



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Eldredgeops milleri
Extinct arthropod

EL-drej-ops
MILL-ur-eye

Eldredgeops, a trilobite, had compound eyes with many separate lenses. The lenses were part of its exoskeleton and composed of the mineral calcite (CaCO_3).



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Middle Devonian,
~385 million years old

HABITAT:
Marine

SIZE

Up to
3–4 inches long

ABILITY

Molted its
exoskeleton to grow

THINK: What modern-day animals
have compound eyes?

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Anartiocystis foerstei
Extinct echinoderm

an-ar-tee-o-SISS-tiss
FUR-stay-eye

Anartiocystis, a rhombiferan (rahm-BIFF-uh-run), was a relative of sea stars and crinoids. It fed on plankton and organic matter floating in seawater.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Early Silurian,
~440 million years old

HABITAT:
Shallow marine

SIZE

Main body
<1 inch wide

ABILITY

Made a skeleton of
crystal plates

THINK: Do you think *Anartiocystis* had
predators? Why or why not?

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Megalograptus ohioensis
Extinct arthropod

meh-guh-lo-GRAP-tuss
o-hi-o-EN(T)-siss

Megalograptus, a eurypterid, or “sea scorpion,” had an exoskeleton made of chitin. It had appendages for swimming and for detecting, grasping, and shredding prey.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Late Ordovician,
~450 million years old

HABITAT:
Shallow marine

SIZE

Up to ~30
inches long

ABILITY

Used body hairs as
sensory organs

THINK: How are extant land scorpions
like/unlike extinct sea scorpions?

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Megalonyx jeffersonii
Extinct giant ground sloth

meh-guh-LAH-niks
jeff-ur-SO-nee-eye

Megalonyx jeffersonii was a large mammal related to extant tree-dwelling sloths. U.S. President Thomas Jefferson named the fossil genus *Megalonyx* (“great claw”).



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Late Pleistocene,
~129–11.7 thousand
years old

HABITAT: Woodlands

SIZE

~10 feet long

ABILITY

Could stand
on hind legs

THINK: How might its large size have
helped or harmed *Megalonyx*?

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Diploceraspis burkei
Extinct tetrapod

dip-lo-suh-RASP-iss
BURK-eye

Diploceraspis was an amphibian-like animal with a flat, boomerang-shaped skull and short, conical teeth. Its long tail moved side-to-side to propel it through the water.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Pennsylvanian–Permian,
~305–290 million years old

HABITAT: Freshwater
lakes and ponds

SIZE

Skull up to
~6 inches wide

ABILITY

May have
burrowed in mud

THINK: What function(s) might the
shape of the skull have served?

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Orthacanthus compressus
Extinct shark

or-thuh-KAN-thuss
kom-PRESS-suss

Orthacanthus was an eel-shaped predatory shark with a long spine sweeping back from its head. Its pointy teeth each had two large cusps that formed a “V” shape.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Pennsylvanian–Permian,
~305–290 million years old

HABITAT: Freshwater to marine

SIZE

Up to
~10 feet long

ABILITY

Survived in
fresh- and saltwater

THINK: What function(s) might the
spine of *Orthacanthus* have served?

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Paraconularia subulata
Extinct cnidarian

pair-uh-kahn-u-LAY-ree-ah
sub-u-LAY-tuh

Paraconularia, a conulariid, was likely a cnidarian—a relative of jellyfishes and corals. Some *Paraconularia* fossils occur in clusters with their bases closely spaced.



AGE OF OHIO FOSSILS:
Early Mississippian,
~355 million years old

HABITAT: Marine

SIZE

Up to several
inches wide

ABILITY

Built a four-sided
exoskeleton

THINK: What parts of conulariids were
most likely to become fossils?

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