

Vocabulary for **Fossils: Evidence of Past Life** guided program

and the **Fossils: Clues to the Past** workshop.

These are words that are commonly used in both the guided program and the workshop. Following the definition for most of the vocabulary words, we have included a sentence in *italics* that incorporates the word.

**Adapted** - one of the basic phenomena of biology; the process whereby an organism becomes better suited to its habitat.

*Plants with smooth-edged leaves are better adapted to warmer climates.*

**Characteristics** - Features that can be used to identify or distinguish between different things.

*The shape of the leaves is one characteristic used to identify a plant.*

**Classification** – a way of arranging things into groups.

*The scientists used a classification that grouped fossils by whether they lived in water or on land.*

**Evidence** – everything that is used to prove something.

*The class examined the evidence to determine what the organism ate.*

**Fossil** – evidence of past life.

*Fossil leaves provide information about what the climate was like millions of years ago.*

**Paleontology** – the study of fossils and all aspects of prehistoric life, including their evolution, ecology, and the rocks in which they are found.

*Julie always loved fossils and wanted to study paleontology when she went to college.*

**Petrified** – turned to stone

*Petrified wood is an exact stone copy of part of a tree, the hard parts of which have been replaced by minerals.*

**Preservation** – kept from destruction or decay.

*Teeth are preserved better than any other body part.*

**Sediment** – material that settles to the bottom of a liquid.

*The mud that washed down the hillside during the storm formed a layer of sediment on the bottom of the lake.*

**Trace fossil** – Trace fossils (also called ichnofossils) are the evidence of animal's activity. Trace fossils are disturbances in the earth from an animal's (or plant's) activity such as resting, locomotion, or feeding.

*Footprints, scat, and burrows are all examples of trace fossils left behind by animals.*