

Dear Louisiana Teachers,

Recently, the United States National Park Service (NPS) and the American Geological Institute (AGI) announced that the first Annual National Fossil Day<sup>time</sup> (NFD) will be observed on Wednesday, October 13, 2010. The mission of NFD is "to celebrate and promote public awareness and stewardship of fossils, as well as to foster a greater appreciation of their scientific and educational value."

As a paleontologist and science educator, I was thrilled to learn of the plans for a National Fossil Day. What an appropriate means to direct attention to the importance and significance of fossils. I have often emphasized to students, teachers, and the general public that fossils are the only direct evidence of past life on Earth. Without fossils, our knowledge of the Earth's history over the past 4.6 billion years would be woefully inadequate and deficient. This side of a time machine, fossils are the best indicators of the ancient organisms that once inhabited this planet. I strongly urge you to plan some type of recognition or activity to coincide with NFD. In order to assist you in observing the first NFD, I have assembled resources for you and your classroom. Some of the resources are from the NPS and the AGI, while I developed some of the materials for use in classrooms. After 32 years of teaching, I know that your time is very valuable. Therefore, I have described and annotated some of the resources that I found most useful for the classroom.

### **NPS fossil poster**

The NPS has a great free poster entitled "Fabulous Fossils of our National Forests and Grasslands" that can be ordered via e-mail. One copy of the poster (FS-641) is shipped flat and is great for display purposes. Another copy of the poster (FS-685) is folded and has lesson plans on the back. Order them quickly before supplies are exhausted. You will need to request the two posters by their poster numbers and include your name and mailing address. The e-mail address is as follows:

[http://www.fs.fed.us/geology/fossil\\_poster.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/geology/fossil_poster.html)

### **Junior Paleontologist Activity Booklet**

This is an excellent resource and consists of a full-color 24-page booklet with a huge variety of educational activities. The NPS has made it available free for non-commercial educational purposes.

### **American Geological Institute Resources**

The AGI has made available online a series of hands-on, inquiry-based explorations consisting of seven investigations entitled "Investigating Earth Systems: Fossils." Each of the investigations has tremendous resources with them. Also note that under the section entitled "Further Research" that there are web sites, magazines, books, and videos! It is great! The e-mail address is as follows:

<http://www.agiweb.org/education/ies/fossils/index.html>

### **Activities and probes of Dr. Stringer**

You will find numerous activities and probes (with a key and short discussion of correct answers for the probes) on fossil and geologic time themes that I have constructed. Many of these activities and probes emphasize Louisiana. Most of them can be easily modified for your grade level. However, there are some that may be best used for middle school and high school (i.e. the activity entitled "Using Fossils to Reveal Ancient Environments in Louisiana," which is labeled as "Fossils.Copenhagen.docx"). The probes all have the term "probe" in their title (such as "Fossils.Louisiana.probe.docx," which is one of my favorites) and are high-lighted in yellow.

### **Louisiana Geological Survey publication**

I have included a PDF of a Public Information Series from the Louisiana Geological Survey entitled "46-Million-Year-Old Marine Fossils from the Cane River Site, North-central Louisiana" that I authored. The publication is written more for the general public and has photographs of vertebrate and invertebrate fossils from a site near Natchitoches, Louisiana. It is great for the students to see pictures of fossils from Louisiana and to discuss how environments have changed over time. It is labeled as "CaneRiver.La.Survey.pdf." I would also add that the Louisiana Geological Survey web site has lots of information on fossils in Louisiana.

I sincerely hope that you will find these resources valuable and that you join me and thousands of other teachers across the nation in celebrating and promoting the importance of fossils in science and education.

Sincerely,

*Gary L. Stringer*

Gary L. Stringer, Ph.D.  
Professor of Geology  
Head, Department of Atmospheric Science, Earth Science, and Physics  
University of Louisiana at Monroe  
Monroe, Louisiana 71209-005

[stringer@ulm.edu](mailto:stringer@ulm.edu)

318 342-1898