

## Protecting the Past For the Future

Important fossils and artifacts have been found by volunteers and hobbyists. By reporting their discoveries to the proper authorities, these people have helped museums and government agencies preserve and protect these pieces of Alaska's past. However, in other instances we have lost valuable information and a part of our national heritage because non-permitted fossil and artifact hunters removed and sold their finds, or put them in private collections – all of which are illegal activities.

By understanding the laws governing and protecting fossils and artifacts, we can ensure that present and future visitors will have an opportunity to make discoveries. Enjoy the ancient wonders as you explore your public lands. But remember - these Fragments of the Past are for all visitors to find and appreciate.



### Laws Protecting Artifacts and/or Fossils

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (P.L. 96-95; 93 Stat. 721; 16 U.S.C. 470)

Paleontological Resources Protection Act of 2009 (P. L. 111-11, Title VI, Subtitle D; 16 U.S.C. 470aaa - 470aaa-11)

Antiquities Act of 1906 (P.L. 59-209; 34 Stat. 225; 54 U.S.C. 320301-320303)

Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 1976 (P.L. 94-579; 90 Stat. 2743; 43 U.S.C. 1701)

Theft of Government Property (62 Stat. 764; 18 U.S.C. 1361)

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990 (P.L. 101-601; 104 Stat. 3048; 25 U.S.C. 3001)

Alaska State Statute AS 41.35

*This brochure is a cooperative effort of the BLM and the State of Alaska, partners in the protection of archaeological sites and areas where fossils are found.*

For more information contact your local agencies:

### Bureau of Land Management

Alaska State Office  
222 West 7th Ave., #13  
Anchorage, AK 99513-7504  
(907) 271-5960

#### Anchorage

BLM Anchorage Field Office  
4700 BLM Road  
Anchorage, AK 99507  
(907) 267-1232

#### Glennallen

BLM Glennallen Field Office  
P.O. Box 147  
Glennallen, AK 99588  
(907) 822-3217

#### Fairbanks

BLM Fairbanks &  
Arctic District Offices  
222 University Ave.  
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3816  
(907) 474-2200

#### Nome

BLM Nome Field Station  
P.O. Box 952  
Nome, AK 99762  
(907) 443-2177

### State of Alaska

Office of History & Archaeology  
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Phone: (907) 269-8700

Permits: [oha.permits@alaska.gov](mailto:oha.permits@alaska.gov)

OHA website: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/>

### BLM Alaska Public Information Center (Public Room)

[www.blm.gov/media/public-room/alaska](http://www.blm.gov/media/public-room/alaska)

### Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (APLIC)

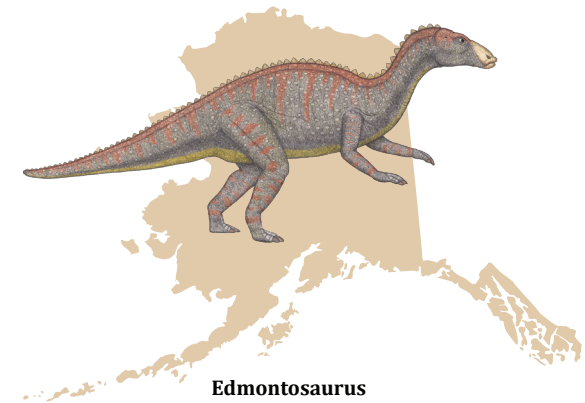
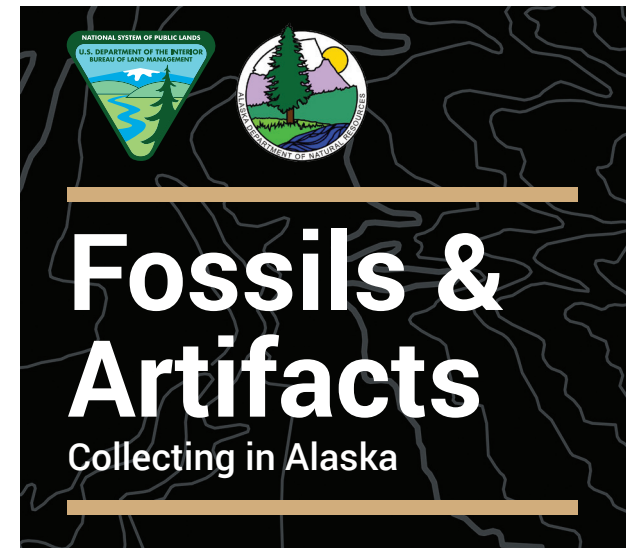
[www.alaskacenters.gov](http://www.alaskacenters.gov)

### BLM Paleontology

[www.blm.gov/paleontology](http://www.blm.gov/paleontology)

The Bureau of Land Management, a federal agency within the Department of the Interior, administers over 270 million acres nationwide, primarily in the western United States and Alaska. To do this, the BLM follows principles of multiple use management striving to find a combination of uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. These resources include recreation, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness, and natural scenic, cultural, paleontological, and other scientific values.

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#### Edmontosaurus

- Late Cretaceous, 68-72 million years old  
- Colville River, Alaska

## What is legal. What is not.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

## Fragments of the Past

Up until 65 million years ago, dinosaurs lived in parts of Alaska, including the North Slope above today's Arctic Circle. Dinosaur remains in Alaska - teeth, bones, footprints, and skin impressions have been discovered only in the last few decades. Traces of other prehistoric animals and plants, including bones and tusks from Ice Age mammoths and mastodons, are found throughout much of the state.



**Albertosaurus**  
- Late Cretaceous  
- 68- 72 million years old  
- Colville River, Alaska

For many thousands of years, people made their living in Alaska by hunting and gathering their food. They traveled widely in search of plants and game in seasonal cycles that have continued in some areas to the present day. Stone tools, pottery fragments, house remains, and other artifacts of everyday life bear witness to their presence in Alaska's unwritten past.



**Mesa Point**  
- 10,000 years old  
- North Slope, Alaska

Over 250 years ago, the first non-Natives came to coastal Alaska. They were followed by miners, military personnel, settlers, and others. Today, remnants of log buildings and mining camps, plus bottles, tin cans, and other remains left behind are themselves artifacts and are evidence of this shared heritage. These artifacts help define Alaska's unique past and are protected from removal by state and federal laws.



**Miner's Cabin**  
- early 1900's  
- near Wiseman, Alaska

## May I Collect Fossils & Artifacts on Public Lands?

### Artifacts

**Federal and State lands:** Not without a permit

Unless you are issued a permit for scientific research, you may not collect any artifacts, ancient or historical, on federal or state lands. This includes arrowheads or flakes, pottery or potsherds, old bottles, pieces of equipment, and remains found in old cabins. These items are part of our national heritage and researchers are still learning much from them. Human burial remains on both public and private land are protected from disturbance and collection by federal and Alaska state law.

### Plant Fossils

**Some Federal Lands:** YES

**State Land:** Not without a permit

Remains of ancient plants are found throughout much of Alaska. It is permissible to collect small samples on most federal lands, though not on lands managed by the National Park Service. You are advised to check with the federal office that manages the lands where you want to collect to find out what restrictions apply. If you wish to hunt plant fossils on private land, be sure to obtain the owner's permission first. It is illegal to sell your plant fossil finds taken from federal land.

### Invertebrate Fossils

**Some Federal Lands:** YES

**State Land:** Not without a permit

Invertebrates are animals without skeletal structures, such as insects, crabs, clams, and snails. You may collect fossils of common invertebrates in small quantities from most federal (though not NPS lands) but check local restrictions first. It is illegal to sell your invertebrate fossil finds taken from federal land.

Generations of people have enjoyed searching for and collecting many types of fossils. Unfortunately, because of the enthusiasm of earlier collectors, fossils are becoming less common. Please leave something for your grandchildren to discover.

**Note:** Fossils of plants and invertebrates that are rare or scientifically important for research projects may require a special paleontological collecting permit, with the items to be curated as federal property.

### Vertebrate Fossils

**Federal and State lands:** Not without a permit

You cannot collect or sell vertebrate fossils from federal or state land without a federal or state permit. Vertebrates include dinosaurs, mammals, sharks, fish, and any other extinct animals with a skeletal structure.

### Who May Get a Permit

Permits are issued for scientific research. They are given to people with specific qualifications that include related college education and experience. Permit holders must also have a letter from a federal or state agency-approved facility accepting collected fossils or artifacts for scientific study and public display. All collected items must be placed in the facility and cannot be kept by the collector.

### Penalties for Violations

Laws protecting fossils and artifacts provide for a variety of penalties. Though some fines may be smaller, the maximum fine is \$250,000 and/or up to 10 years in jail. If you see someone illegally removing artifacts or fossils, please contact the Alaska State Troopers or a land management agency.

### What Can I Do To Help?

Always leave vertebrate fossils and artifacts in place, as well as plant and invertebrate fossils on state land. Their location and position tell a scientist just as much about the past as the item itself. They can be extremely delicate and attempting to move them could destroy them. Remember, they have survived in place for dozens or even millions of years and a little more time won't make much difference. Please report your discoveries to the federal or state agency that manages the area where you made your find. You will be doing a great service to all Alaskans, including future generations.