



Paleontologists study fossils, and the rocks in which fossils occur, to understand how ancient organisms lived. This focus enables paleontologists to document and interpret the history of life on Earth.

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Important Scientist Characteristics:

A successful paleontologist has an inquisitive nature.

A paleontologist combines information across different scientific fields to answer questions about how nature and natural processes worked in the distant past.

Example of a simple research question I have tried

to answer: Can fossils help us answer questions about the evolutionary origin of reptiles from amphibians? The key fossils studied in this research are found in rocks of the Paleozoic Era, long before dinosaurs appeared on Earth.

Technology or equipment used in research:

A classic piece of equipment used in paleontology is the geologic rock hammer. The geologic rock hammer is used in the field to collect fossils and rock samples.

Most Exciting Discovery

I worked with "Dinosaur Jim" Jensen at the Dry Mesa dinosaur quarry in Colorado. We excavated the nearly 9-foot long "Ultrasaurus" scapula, the largest known when it was discovered.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I have wanted to be a scientist for as long as I can remember. I still hear stories about my kindergarten days digging deep holes behind my family's garage in search of fossils. Unknown to me at the time, it was doomed to be a fruitless search in Connecticut's glacial till soils!

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fossils/paleontology-publications.htm>