

# The essentials of the Scottish Fossil Code

## Seek permission

In practice, common fossils and small geological specimens have traditionally been collected without permission and usually without hindrance. However, you are acting within the law if you obtain permission to extract, collect and retain fossils.

## Access responsibly

Consult the Scottish Outdoor Access Code prior to accessing land. Be aware that there are restrictions on access and collecting at some locations protected by statute.

## Collect responsibly

Exercise restraint in the amount collected and the equipment used. Be careful not to damage fossils and the fossil resource. Record details of both the location and the rocks from which fossils are collected.

## Seek advice

If you find an exceptional or unusual fossil do not try to extract it; but seek advice from an expert. Also seek help to identify fossils or dispose of an old collection.

## Label and look after

Collected specimens should be labelled and taken good care of.

## Donate

If you are considering donating a fossil or collection chose an accredited museum, or one local to the collection area.

# How to get hold of the code

The full Scottish Fossil Code provides detailed advice on best practice in the collection, identification, conservation and storage of fossil specimens found in Scotland.

The Scottish Fossil Code is available to view and download from the NatureScot website [www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)



Responsible fossil collecting. ©NatureScot

Local office contact details are available from our website [www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)

Cover: Ammonite fossil in a beach cobble from Northeast Skye.  
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ISBN: 978-1-85397-548-6  
TCPIK0220

# Scottish Fossil Code





## Scotland's fossil heritage

Fossils can be defined as 'the remains or traces of an ancient animal or plant preserved in rock'.

Scotland has a remarkable diversity of fossils stretching back over 1200 million years. Scottish fossils help us understand the evolution of life on Earth and the changing geographies and environments that existed throughout Scotland's long and varied geological history.

19th-century Scottish geologists such as Hugh Miller established basic geological principles using fossils from Scottish localities, and made them widely known to the general public. These fossils' localities are of historical and cultural importance.

Scotland's fossil heritage is an important scientific, economic, educational and leisure resource which has a wide range of users including research scientists, students, school pupils, amateur and commercial collectors and the general public.



Study of a fossiliferous exposure on Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh.  
©NatureScot

## The need to safeguard the fossil heritage

Scotland's fossils, both in the environment and in collections, are a non-renewable part of the natural heritage. If not properly looked after and managed, the fossil heritage is vulnerable to damage and destruction.



Identifying a fossil find. ©BGS

At places such as the coast, weathering and erosion reveals fossils. In many cases, responsible collection of newly exposed fossils is desirable and of conservation value, since without collection the fossils would only become weathered and destroyed. However, some fossil localities are sensitive to collecting, and the fossil resource can easily be damaged and destroyed. Locations where there is either a limited fossil-bearing resource, rare and exceptional fossils, or exposed fossils used for educational purposes, are particularly vulnerable.

Once collected, the failure to properly care for fossil specimens and associated information such as where they were found, can result in their deterioration and loss and is therefore wasteful of Scotland's fossil heritage.

## Scottish Fossil Code

The Scottish Fossil Code encourages fossil collectors, amateur, and academic, institutional and commercial, to collect



responsibly and to manage collections in such a way that they will be useful to future generations. The Code also aims to enhance public interest in the fossil heritage of Scotland and promote this resource for scientific, educational, and recreational purposes.

A fossil leaf from Mull. ©National Museums Scotland

Fossil collecting is an essential activity that provides the basic material and data for the science of palaeontology. New finds add to our record of past life and environments on planet Earth. Following the Code will increase the personal interest and satisfaction that can be gained from forming a fossil collection, and help conserve the fossil heritage of Scotland.



Examining fossils on a Fife beach. ©NatureScot