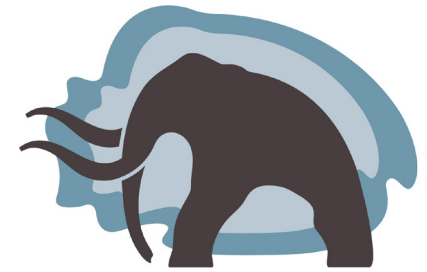


Fossil finder



Identify your finds with this handy guide



Belemnite

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Cephalopoda

Small, bullet-shaped fossils from a squid-like animal, over 70 million-years-old. They are actually only the animal's hard rear part. They look like stone bullets among the chalk – smooth, pale grey and 2-6cm long.



Coprolites

Dung from animals that lived here hundreds of thousands of years ago. Look out for smooth, rounded or lozenge-shapes stones, sometimes thinner at one end. They could be 700,000 year old hyaena poo.

Freshwater mussel

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Bivalvia

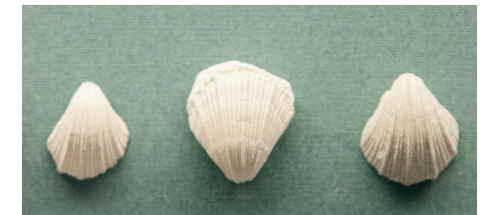
Pieces of dark, mud-coloured mussel shells that are over 500,000 years old. These freshwater mussels lived in the ancient rivers that formed the Cromer Forest Bed and may have been eaten by our early ancestors here. Sidestrand is a good place to look.



Brachiopods

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Brachiopoda

Small, scallop-like fossils that lived in the tropical seas here over 70m years ago. There were once over 1200 species – some lived in cold seas, some in warm. Scientists can tell what the climate was like in the past from the brachiopods they find.



Mammoth molar

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia

Mammoth teeth look like slices of very stale bread. They are about 15cm long, and ridged. You can tell what species the tooth is from by the number of ridges, so make sure you count them.



Echinoids

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Echinodermata
Class: Echinoidea

Small, rounded 'pebbles' with five lines radiating from the top. Echinoids are sea urchins that lived here over 70m years ago when the chalk was forming. You can sometimes find whole ones among the shingle.

Deer antler fragments

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia

Look out for ridged, cylindrical stones – they might be pieces of deer antlers. Red deer roamed here over 700,000 years ago, when the Cromer Forest Bed was forming. West Runton is one of the best places to find antler remains.



Vertebrate bone fragment

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia

Fossil bones of animals from shrews to mammoths are hidden in the beach. Look out for stones that look like pieces of bone – porous on the inside, smooth on the outside. They could be from an extinct rhino or even a hippopotamus.



Flint Hand axe

A rare find – hunt for black, glassy flints with sharp, chipped edges. Flint tools were made by early people by carefully chipping away at the edges of hand-sized pebbles to create a sharp blade. It took ages, so they were very precious.



Paramoudra (pot stones)

Large flint stones with curious holes in the middle. Some scientists think these mysterious holes were formed by burrowing sea creatures – though they look for all the world as if someone has drilled the hole by hand!



SAFE & RESPONSIBLE FOSSIL HUNTING MEANS:

- Don't climb on the cliffs. It's dangerous and can add to coastal erosion.
- Never dig into the cliffs. This is to protect the cliffs from added erosion and to stop dangerous mud or rock slides.
- Only take a few representative specimens.
- Write a label for your fossils, where and when it was found and take a picture.
- Never hammer the rocks – you need a special tool to do this.
- Leave large fossils for others to see, otherwise seek professional advice.
- Wear non-slip footwear that protects your feet (not sandals/flip-flops).
- Be aware of the tides and make sure you can't be trapped.
- Be aware of people around you.

Sponge

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Porifera

Fossil sponges often look like bubbly, flower-like patterns within a flint pebble. Sponge skeletons usually contain silica, the glass-like mineral which forms flint pebbles within the chalk. Even though they look like plants they are actually animals.

