



Day 1: Flagstaff Festival of Science Junior Paleontologists

My Favorite Little Dinosaur

Dear Junior Paleontologists,

Let's have fun with fossils!

My name is David Gillette. Sometimes I am called Dinosaur Dave. I am a paleontologist. I have been a paleontologist since I went to college a long time ago. I am interested in geology, paleontology, and biology – that is, rocks, fossils, and animals and plants. My friend Paul, age 7, once said “Dr. Dave, you are half geologist, half paleontologist, and half biologist!” You will find out more about my life with dinosaurs and other fossils during the next ten days.



Some of you have visited The Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff, and you might remember some of the displays. We hope others get a chance to visit someday. Everyone is welcome to join the fun in the Junior Paleontologist Program for the Flagstaff Festival of Science.

Many of the fossils and much of the art we use in the Junior Paleontologist program are at MNA. Most of the fossils in this program came from the Colorado Plateau or nearby – from northern Arizona and surrounding areas.

To become a Junior Paleontologist if you are a kid, work with your parents. They can help you read and work through the activities. The program will have a new posting every day for 10 days, with things to do and puzzles to solve. To become a Junior Paleontologist, you can participate in any of the activities, from just one day to all days.

The best way to participate is to download and print each day's activities, and use those sheets to find answers, draw or paint your ideas, or write a poem or story. We will call this your Junior Paleontologist Notebook or Journal.

Remember

- Dinosaur detectives: all answers are good ideas.
- Dinosaur artists: all art is good art.
- Dinosaur writers: all stories and poems are good stories and poems.
- You are welcome to ask questions and try out your ideas.

Keep everything you make in your Junior Paleontologist Journal. When the Museum of Northern Arizona opens to the public, take your Journal to the front desk, ask for an official MNA Junior Paleontologist badge, and go see the fossil displays.

At the end of today's activities, I will give you an email address where you can send questions, your answers, your art, or your stories and poems.

My Favorite Little Dinosaur



MNA V3315 *Coelophysis bauri*

My favorite little dinosaur is *Coelophysis* (SEE-low-FIE-sis) from the Triassic Period of New Mexico. This skull of a nearly full-grown adult could fit in the palm of my hand. Even though it is tiny, it is a relative of *T. rex*. This beautiful skull is on display at It is the almost the oldest dinosaur in the world, like the GREAT GREAT GREAT uncle or aunt of all other dinosaurs MNA.

What is YOUR favorite dinosaur? _____

What is YOUR second favorite dinosaur? _____

Dinosaur Detectives

Look carefully – can you figure out what *Coelophysis* ate? _____



Answer: Little *Coelophysis* was a meat-eater. It was bipedal -- walking on its two rear legs -- like a chicken or an ostrich but it had a very long tail. *Coelophysis* was a quick predator, probably feeding on fish and other small animals. Its pointed teeth are perfect for catching small prey.

The painting on the next page is in an exhibit with the skull at the Museum of Northern Arizona. It shows three *Coelophysis* looking for food, and an armored reptile in the background. One reason it is my favorite little dinosaur is that this skull, and many others, came from a place called "Ghost Ranch."

Dinosaur Artists

In the space below, make a drawing or painting of the whole body of *Coelophysis* in life.

Does your drawing look like the dinosaurs in this painting?



Dinosaur Detectives

Can you help me solve this puzzle?

Many years ago, I got a letter from a student in grade school with this question:

Dear Dr. Gillette,
What is your favorite MITITER?

It took me three days to figure out what this question means. Can you figure it out? Look for the answer in Day 2.

Your Answer: _____

Dinosaur Authors

In the space below, make up a story or a poem about a dinosaur. It can be any dinosaur.

Tomorrow: My favorite medium size dinosaur.

You can send an email message to me at DavidDGillette2020@gmail.com. I would love to hear from you!