



Leave What You Find

GRABBING YOUR GROUP'S ATTENTION

Ask participants how scientists know what dinosaurs looked like. (They find fossils and reconstruct the skeletons.) It is important for scientists to find the pieces in their original positions (relative to one another) so that they can see how the pieces fit back together. The same is true for cultural human made artifacts.

THE ACTIVITY

Use three simple picture puzzles. Break the puzzles into their pieces. In a yard, sandlot, or playground, scatter all the pieces of one puzzle in a small area. In another location scatter just two or three pieces, and in another location leave just one piece. Split your group into three teams and have one group at each location recover the pieces. Ask each group to try and reconstruct the puzzle or describe the picture based on the pieces they found.

THE DISCUSSION

Ask each group how easy it was to reconstruct the puzzle. Discuss the importance to scientists of finding fossils or artifacts where they were originally deposited. Discuss the impacts of intentional vandalism or theft of fossils or artifacts. Discuss the effects of unintentional impacts, i.e.; driving off-road, hobby collecting, campsite construction. Ask the group if they can think of other ways in which fossils and artifacts can be lost or damaged. Discuss ways in which these resources can be viewed and enjoyed on-site without damage. Remind the group that it is against the law to remove or destroy these resources! Refer to the Background Information for more details about this discussion.

Note: Although this Quick Concept deals with fossils and artifacts, the principle of leaving what you find applies to all things that should remain undisturbed in the backcountry. Wildlife, petrified rock, and nests are examples of other discoveries to leave for people to enjoy.