

Be a Fossil Detective

Did you know that Michigan was once covered by ancient seas and glaciers? These oceans and icebergs deposited many kinds of rocks. One of the rock types that is in the Michigan basin is limestone, which is composed of tiny pieces of animal and plant fossils, shell fragments and other fossilized debris. Here is an activity to discover if a rock that you find is limestone.

BE AWARE: Before you start collecting Petoskey stones (or any other natural material), you need to be aware of the collecting rules and regulations where you are. Collecting in national parks is always prohibited, and many state parks also forbid any collecting. One notable exception is Petoskey State Park, just outside Petoskey, where collecting is allowed.

This activity is sponsored by



What you need:

- Rocks
- Piece of Chalk
- Vinegar
- Cups

How to:

1. Find different kinds of rocks in your yard or neighborhood.
2. Put a piece of chalk in one cup and a rock in another cup.
3. With help from your parents, pour vinegar over the chalk and the rock.
4. Is the chalk bubbling or fizzing? Is your rock bubbling or fizzing?
5. How else did your rock change when it was wet?

Fun Fact



Did you know that Michigan's state stone is the Petoskey stone? The Petoskey stone is a fossil from fragments of coral reef that lived in the Michigan seas around 350 million years ago!

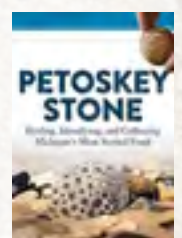
Related Books:



Weird But True Know-It-All: Rocks and Minerals
by Michael Burgan



My Book of Rocks and Minerals: Things to Find, Collect, and Treasure
by Devin Dennie



Petoskey Stone: Finding, Identifying, and Collecting Michigan's Most Storied Fossil
by Dan R. Lynch

What's happening?

When vinegar touches chalk it reacts to the calcium carbonate in the chalk and forms a gas, which creates the bubbles you see. If your rock bubbles or fizzes, it is reacting with the calcium carbonate in the rock (from all the fossils), so you may have found a piece of limestone. What else did you notice about your rock when it was wet? It may be easier to see fossils in a rock when it is wet.