Fun stuff you can do at home: FOSSIL JUMBLE!

As a paleontologist, sometimes you can find whole rock layers covered with fossils. Other times you will only be able to find pieces of fossils. A good paleontologist can identify a creature from only a fragment of its original body. Can you?

Here is a picture of a number of fossils that can be found right here in New York. See if you can identify what creature each of the pieces came from. Use the pictures of the complete lifeforms as a guide.

- How many of each type of creature are there?
- How many complete fossils are there?
- Which fossil do you find the most interesting?

Lifeforms to Look for:

- Brachiopods
- Trilobites
- Echinoderms

Have you ever found a rock like this?

Museum of the Earth is a public educational venue for the Paleontological Research Institution.
Sea Shells in Stone?

When walking in the gorges you may find rocks that contain sea shells. How did they get there? The nearest ocean today is over 250 miles away! These shells are the remains of animals that lived in an ancient ocean in New York, 380 million years ago (Devonian). New York State was covered by a warm tropical sea inhabited by brachiopods, trilobites, crinoids, corals, and other marine animals. Over time, a lot of mud and sand (sediments) settled in the ocean to form the abundant strata (layers of rock) that you can see in the Finger Lakes. How long do you think it took for all this sediment to accumulate?

Canadian rocks in NY?

When walking in a stream have you ever found a smooth, pinkish rock? Did this rock have crystals in it? Why don’t these rocks resemble the strata of sedimentary rocks that make up the gorges? The pinkish rocks are igneous (ig-knee-us) which means they formed from hot, melted rock underneath the Earth’s surface a long time ago. Some rocks exposed in Canada are identical to the boulders found in New York State. How did this happen? Glaciers! 12,000 years ago, during the Pleistocene, mile-thick sheets of ice bulldozed south across Canada and over most of New York. When they melted they left their luggage. Their luggage are rocks that they carried and pushed from other areas. These are called glacial erratics (ear-rat-ticks).