

Denmark Uncovers Fossils – Geological Citizen Science at the Natural History Museum of Denmark

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Many people have fossils hidden in drawers at home or have come across them walking in the countryside. However, few know of the valuable knowledge these fossils hold to better understand the past, present and future or where to go to find out more.

This new Citizen Science project at the Natural History Museum of Denmark aims to involve and engage more people in the study of geology and paleontology. In collaboration with avocational collectors, other Danish natural history museums and fossil themed societies we are developing an online portal as a go-to resource for Danish fossil collecting: mitfossil.dk. This website allows both new and experienced collectors to upload their fossil finds, curate their own digital collection, and interact with experts and view finds of others, whilst also providing information on how to fossil hunt safely and responsibly. Through a gamified voting system, users of the website can help identify each other's fossils. Users are also rewarded for applying as much scientific information to the fossils as possible, encouraging them to work more scientifically with their fossil finds.

The online portal will also be used as a springboard for inviting people to participate in the research of the paleontological collections at the museum, giving people firsthand experience working with paleontology and museum collections. By building a dataset of the fossils found across Denmark, we hope to harness the power of these hidden fossils, and the enthusiasm of the public to bring new insights to palaeobiodiversity and distribution studies.

The project and its many aspects will help improve people's general perception of the relevance of geology and encourage engagement in the geosciences.