

THIRD PLANET

Earth's history is the setting for discovery of how geology and life have changed over time.

Torosaur - Entering the *Third Planet* gallery, you will come face to face with a 65-million-year-old Torosaur. Originally buried for millions of years, movement in the Earth's crust helped lift it toward the surface as water washed away the soil above it. Why are there different colored fossils?

Hint: Look for clues in the large text labels near the Torosaur's skull.

The Ring of Fire - As you continue into the next room, find the wall display titled *Continental Positions Through Time*, showing where different tectonic plates meet. Over millions of years, they ground together and moved, leading to big changes in their position on Earth. Take a look at the four maps that show where the continents were located through time and find North America 300 million years ago. Was North America closer or further from the Earth's equator than it is today?

Silurian Reef - Enjoy the cave and fossils beyond, then pause when you come to the shimmering lights of this tropical underwater scene. This represents Milwaukee 410 million years ago. Wisconsin used to be farther south and under water, but tectonic plates bumped, ground, and moved over time, leading us to where we are today.

Our state fossil is named for an animal that was living at this time - the trilobite. In the exhibit they are the ones that look a bit like large "roly-poly" bugs. Take a look around the reef. How many trilobites can you count?

Hell Creek T. rex - Continue on until you see the diorama of the *T. rex* eating a triceratops. Dinosaurs thrived on Earth for about 160 million years. Check out the exhibit opposite the *T. rex* titled *And Then There Were None*. Which of the competing theories do you believe finally caused their extinction?

Glaciers and "The Rise of the Mammals" - Escaping the *T. rex*, continue to the next, and last, room in the *Third Planet*. You will find yourself standing among fossil skeletons of mammals that evolved to dominate the land following the extinction of the non-avian dinosaurs. This includes the mastodon, an animal that existed during the time when glaciers last covered parts of Wisconsin 10,000-12,000 years ago. Explore the glacial cave to get an inside look at one of these amazing ice sheets. Find the exhibit window that shows examples of other life that lived during the ice age. True or False: Did seals and walrus once splash about in the waters of the Great Lakes?

what will you find?

Fast forward to today, and you'll see a mature ecosystem known as a tropical rainforest, the most biologically diverse environment on Earth. Explore and enjoy!