

# Badlands National Park Fossil Exhibit Trail

1. A. What is the name of the fossilized tortoises found in the park?

**The fossilized tortoises belonged to the genus, *Styemys***

- B. What defense strategy do turtles and snails have in common?

**Both turtles and snails have shells. These organisms pull their bodies into their protective shells when they are disturbed.**

- C. Are turtles and snails common in Badlands National Park? Why or why not?

**Turtles and snails are not common in the park. The park's habitat is too dry to support large numbers of turtles and snails.**

2. A. What did *Merycoidon* eat?

***Merycoidon* is a type of oreodont. Oreodonts were herbivores. Their diet consisted mostly of plants.**

- B. Although *Merycoidon* had fangs, what do the grinding teeth of herbivores generally look like?

**Grinding teeth are typically flat.**

3. A. How big could *Archaeotherium* heads be?

**Their heads could measure over 4 feet long.**

- B. What is an omnivore?

**Omnivores are organisms that eat both plants and animals.**

- C. List some other omnivores alive today.

**Humans are examples of omnivores.**

4. A. Did *Hyaenodon* eat plants or animals?

**They ate animals.**

B. Why are fossils of predators less common than fossils of their prey?

**Not as many predator fossils as prey fossils are recovered from the park because prey population sizes are always larger than predator population sizes.**

C. Describe a predator/prey relationship among animals found in Badlands National Park.

**An example of a predator/prey relationship can be observed between the prairie dog and the black-footed ferret. Black footed ferrets (predators) eat prairie dogs (prey). There are more prairie dogs than black-footed ferrets.**

5. A. What animal was *Hyracodon* similar to?

**This animal was similar to a rhinoceros.**

B. Can you list any animals found in Badlands National Park that are in danger of extinction? Why are these animals in danger?

**The black-footed ferret is in danger of extinction because of habitat loss. They live exclusively in prairie dog homes and feed exclusively on prairie dogs.**

6. What animal is an ancestor of the horse?

**The *Mesohippus* was an ancestor to the horse.**

7. What improvements would you make to the Fossil Exhibit Trail?

**A suggestion would be to update the information kiosk.**