



Fifth grade fossil hunters and a mixture of parents and teachers lined a ridge and watached as a couple of adults herded a snake along the bottom of a canyon south of Russell Springs during the outdoor education trip held on May 4. The weather was great for the annual fossil hunt, but the skies clouded up later that day and a tornado hit Greensburg that night.

# Annual fossil hunt turns up cool snakes



Fossil hunters swarmed across the niobrara chalk canyons south of Russell Springs searching for a treasure from the ancient ocean to take home. The fifth graders, teacher and parents came back with a

variety of specimens including shark teeth, fish scales, buffalo bones and lots of pretty rocks and crystals.

**By Tom Betz**

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The sky was foggy as the day began, but by the time the fifth grade students from North Elementary arrived south of Russell Springs it was cool but bright and sunny.

The sky clouded up again after the fossil hunt, but the real damage was later that night when a tornado hit Greensburg about 60 miles southeast of where the kids were fossil hunting on May 4.

The annual outdoor education trip includes a stop at the Wallace Museum so the kids could see some of the fossils that have been found in northwest Kansas, and at Fort Wallace.

The buses and accompanying vehicles arrived at the fossil hunt site about noon, and it did not take long for the kids to swarm across the canyons looking for fossils.

By the end of the hunt the kids had found over a dozen different species of animal and volunteer paleontologists Larry Harper, Doug Whitson and his wife Pam helped identify the items found. Kim Amos, a geologist from Goodland, was a great help with identification of the different rock formations and crystals the kids found.

This year many of the kids had the chance to touch a brown snake that Harper caught slowly sliding out of its hole. The cool morning had slowed down the usually swift moving snake, and those who had the courage to touch the snake were surprised at how cold it felt.

As the sun warmed things up the snake became more active and when Harper let it go it moved away quickly.

A welcome addition for many this year was a portable restroom, which had a long line when the buses arrived and before they headed back to Goodland.

Myron Tedford was the organizer, and made sure there was plenty of water and other drinks to keep the kids hydrated and snacks to keep their energy up.

The landowner, Larry Haverfield, who lives south of Russell Springs, gave permission for the field trip, and has given permission to other people to search the canyons on his land.

Fifth grade students in this year's outdoor education trip included John Aguirre, Shelby Arnold, Ace Arteage, Shayne Austin, Brook Bahe, Alicia Benavides, Ian Bonsall, Ashleigh Borders, Milan Brannick, Hope Cochran, Colton Cooper, Jesse Cooper, Fionna Cruz, Katrina Delgado, Raymond Eli, Lauren Espinoza, Sierra Estes, Timothy Fugleberg, Breanna Garrett, Jovita Garza, Tyler Gastineau, Kendra Grammon, Brooke Heinrich, John Hendrich, Miranda Hernandez, Dakota Hooker, Elizabeth House, Gage Ihrig, Gannon Ihrig, Katera Johnson, Mara Kling, Jordan Knitig, Jarod Lake, Amanda McClary, Shay Miller, Zachery Miller, Jose Nunez, Pilar Olave, Johnathan Peden, Amber Perdw, Halie Price, Karlee Raile, Austin Rains, Bracelyn Redlin, Dax Ruhs, Abraham Sarmiento, Connor Simpson, Megan Siruta, Amber Smith, Taylen Smith, Todd Snethen, Elisa Soto, Tyler Steggall, Carria Stevens, Garrett Taylor, Berkley White, Brianna White, Garrett Williams, Holton Witman and Machel Zupko.

**Photos by Tom Betz  
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Larry Harper caught and held a brown racer snake that was found poking its head out to get some sun. Those who were brave enough to touch the snake were surprised as how cold it felt. Because of the cool weather the snake was moving slow enough that it could be caught. Later as the snake warmed up it began to move faster, and when Harper released the snake it quickly slithered away.



A welcome addition to the annual fossil trip this year was a portable potty that was brought out to the site the day before the hunt. The fifth graders, teachers and parents were happy to have the restroom even if it did mean standing in line for awhile.