

Fossils In North Dakota

FIND is a newsletter dedicated to helping young readers (in age or spirit) express their love of fossils and paleontology, and to help them learn more about the world under their feet. Each issue will be broken up into sections including Feature Fossils, Travel Destinations, Reader Art, Ask Mr. Lizard, and more!

Winter 2020 No. 39

Editor: Becky Barnes
North Dakota Geological Survey
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505

becbarnes@nd.gov

Next Issue: March 2021

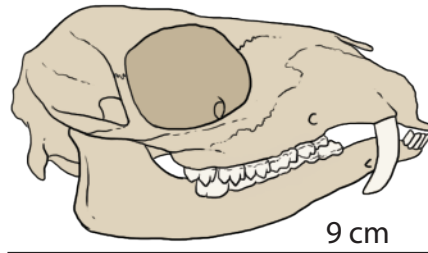
Please e-mail us if you wish to receive the electronic version of FIND, or view past issues at:
<https://www.dmr.nd.gov/ndfossil/kids/>



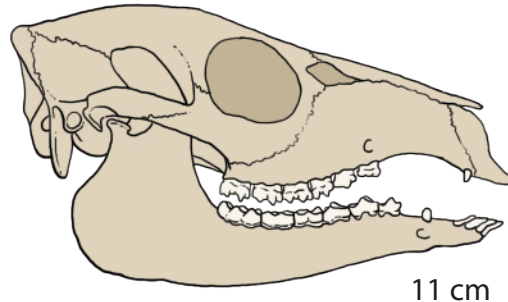
Feature Fossil: *Leptomeryx*

This small ancestral deer used to roam across North Dakota's Little Badlands during the Eocene and Oligocene, 34-30 million years ago. During this period of time, the environment was becoming more dry, from the previously wet and swampy Paleocene. Dinosaurs are extinct (except birds), and mammals are branching out to fill in all those available habitats. *Leptomeryx* was named by Joseph Leidy in 1853. Their molars had shearing edges where the tops and bottoms would meet – excellent for shredding leaves and vegetation. Like many modern deer, they also had tiny canine teeth in the front of their mouth. That's right! An herbivore with big pointy teeth?! Their dainty legs were tipped with tiny hooves – two on the back feet, and four on the front feet.

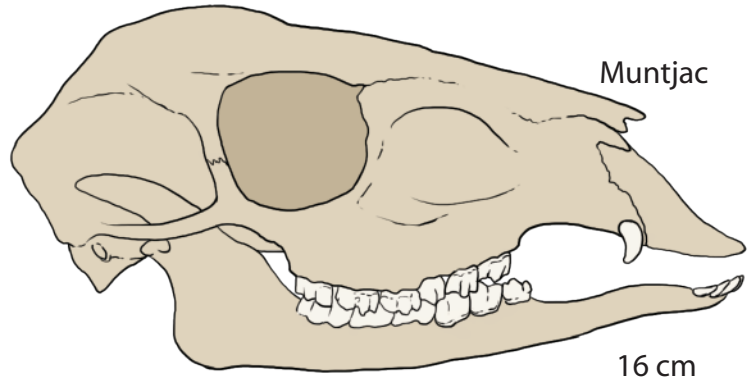
The next time you visit the Dakota Zoo, check out the muntjac enclosure! We still have tiny deer around today – and these little beauties also have very large fang-like canine teeth. Muntjac bucks (males) have antlers, while the does (females) do not. Neither buck nor doe *Leptomeryx* had antlers - much like the mouse deer - another pint-sized creature still alive today.



Mouse deer



Leptomeryx



Muntjac

Dig Information:

Registration delayed until April, so we can see how COVID is affecting everyone (and us). We cannot say 100% that the 2021 digs will happen. We'll know more later.

ALL DIGS:

Full Day = \$30
Half Day = \$20

Medora:

Full Days: June 17-18, 22-23 (ages 15+)
Family Half-Days: June 19-20 (AM & PM) (ages 10+)
Adult Half-Days: June 24 (AM only) (ages 15+)

Bismarck:

Full Days: June 30, July 1, 6-8, 12-15, 19-22, 26-28 (ages 15+)
2-day session for Experienced Diggers: July 29-30 (ages 15+)
Family Half-Days: July 2, 9, 16, 23 (ages 10+)

Pembina:

Full Days: August 6, 8-13 (ages 15+)
Family Half-Days: August 7, 14 (AM & PM sessions) (ages 10+)
Adult Half-Days: August 15 (AM only) (ages 15+)

NOTE: there will be NO food served at Pembina this year. With the unfortunate effects of COVID on our partners, some of our food vendors have had to close.

Deck the Halls!

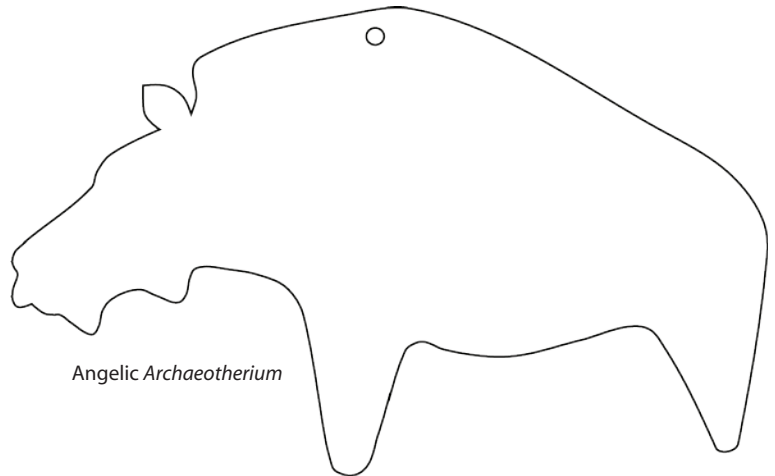
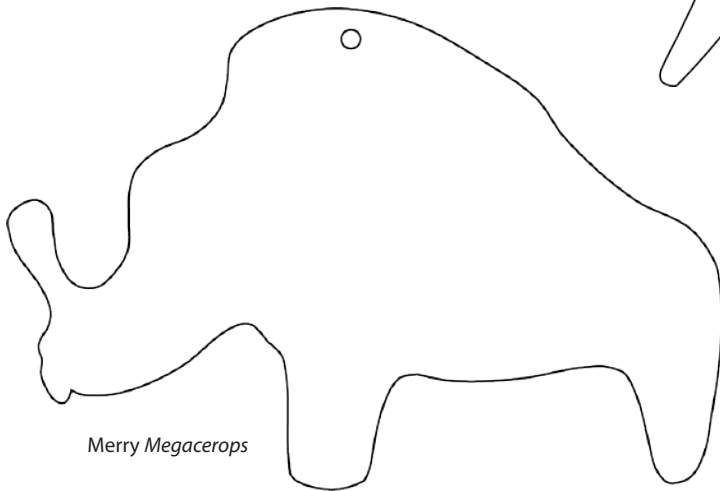
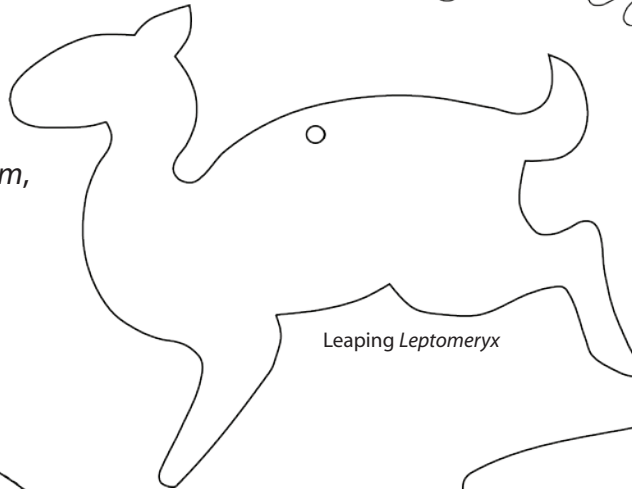
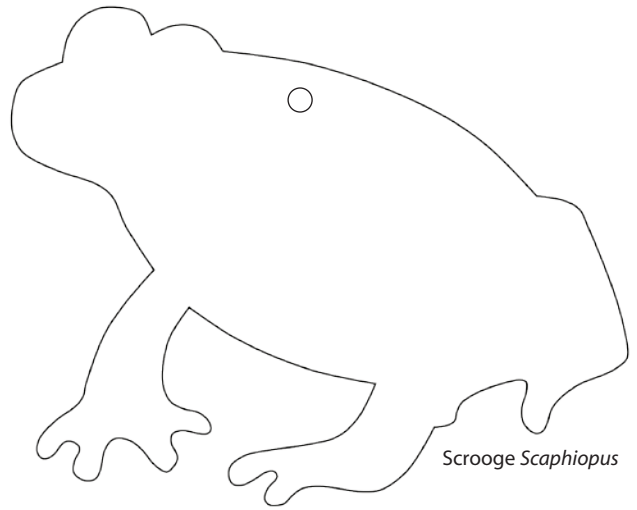
We're feeling the need to be crafty while stuck at home. Below are some Oligocene-inspired ornaments to help deck your halls, tree, or whatever you use to celebrate this holiday season. Cut them out of cardboard, plywood, paper, foam, or more, and color to your hearts content. We'd love to see what designs you come up with!

At right we have Scrooge *Scaphiopus*, the Toad, hunkered down waiting for winter to end.

Middle is Leaping *Leptomeryx*, the Deer, ready for their nutcracker performance.

Bottom left is Merry *Megacerops*, getting the tinsel and lights out.

Bottom right is Angelic *Archaeotherium*, about to head out in the evenings for some socially distant caroling!



Just Imagine...

The small animal wove its way through the scattered scrub brushes and occasional tree, looking for the most tender shoots of green to nibble on. New blades of grass sprouted across the plains, hardier and faster growing than the ferns and underbrush that had inhabited the area millions of years ago, and able to withstand a drier climate. The *Leptomeryx's* dainty hooves gripped the unstable soil and rocks, its short hair blending into the browns and greys of the land. A grunt in the distance made the little deer freeze, its ears alert, nose twitching. Two large hornless rhinos, *Subhyracodon*, were leisurely making their way to one of the wandering streams nearby. Not many predators dared attack such large creatures, and the *Leptomeryx* made use of their bulky presence. The big herbivores paid little attention to the smaller animal as they made their way to drink. *Leptomeryx* had no horns or claws, relying instead on camouflage and speed to keep out of harms way – and the occasional imposing bodyguard.