Scavenger Hunt Key

Name: ___________________________  Class: ___________________________

**Directions:** As you navigate through *Getting Into the Fossil Record*, keep your eyes open for answers to the following questions. Hint: The questions are in order of appearance.

1. **Name five kinds of trace fossils.**

Burrows, coprolites, tracks, trails, nests and footprints are examples of trace fossils.

2. **Find the walnut. How did it become a fossil?**

The walnut was mineralized. Mineralization is when minerals carried in water build up in the spaces of an organism and eventually become rock.

3. **What happened to the mammoth?**

This Alaskan mammoth became frozen quickly and preserved in ice, before decomposition, weather or other processes could destroy it.

4. **Why are the mouse and the jellyfish being compared?**

The mouse and the jellyfish are being compared in order to explain how hard parts, such as bones and teeth, are more readily preserved in the fossil record than soft tissue. An organism like the jellyfish, which is made up entirely of soft tissue, is far less likely to avoid destruction or decomposition and become a fossil.

5. **Why is it difficult for an organism living in the rainforest to become a fossil?**

It is difficult for an organism living in a rainforest to become fossilized. The large amount of rain throughout the year causes rapid decay of dead organisms. Also, many scavengers and decomposers work quickly to break down the tissues and structures of rainforest life.

6. **What are two reasons why many organisms never become part of the fossil record?**

Not all organisms are equally protected from destruction after death, are made of structures that fossilize well, or die in environments that are likely to lead to fossilization.
7. What are two ways that geologic processes can destroy a fossil?

A fossil can be destroyed or altered when it is melted, crushed, moved or eroded.

8. Why isn't igneous rock a good place to look for fossils?

Fossils are rarely found in igneous rock because the extreme temperatures would destroy any organism caught in a lava flow.

9. Find the map of Montana. What are two things to keep in mind when you are looking for a fossil like T. rex? What do the colors and letters represent?

You need to look for rock that is the right type (sedimentary) and the right age. The colors and letters represent the different ages and types of rocks.

BONUS: You are a paleontologist at a fossil dig site in the Gobi Desert. You find a site filled with many fossilized leaves, teeth, bones, eggs and even footprints from a variety of creatures. BUT you find no trace of insects. One possible explanation is that no insects lived in the Gobi at that time. What is another possible explanation for the lack of insects?

Just because no insects have been found, that in itself is not proof that they were not there at that time. This may have been an ancient environment with destructive forces that prevented insects from fossilizing. It is possible that geologic processes may have destroyed insect fossils in this area or you simply may not have found any insect fossils, even though they are present.