

Looking for biology in the chemistry of fossils



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Life is built out of the raw materials available in the surrounding environment. All raw materials are labeled with chemical signatures that can be used to identify the resource as it travels along a food web. From a chemical perspective, the lifetime of an organism is spent in the pursuit of these signatures. Robust chemical signatures built into organisms can persist beyond life, and indeed, biological materials become fossils simply by preserving through geological time. The presentation will explore how physical and chemical evidence retained by fossils can be used to interpret the biology of extinct organisms. When did fossil penguins stop feeling the cold? How have biological changes in fossil antelope been distinguished from changes in the burial environment? Both will be discussed, along with an introduction to new research focused on the colors of fossil feathers and diets of fossil seabirds.

MCI
*Topics in
Museum
Conservation*

February 16, 2012
10:45 am
Thursday

MCI Theater
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