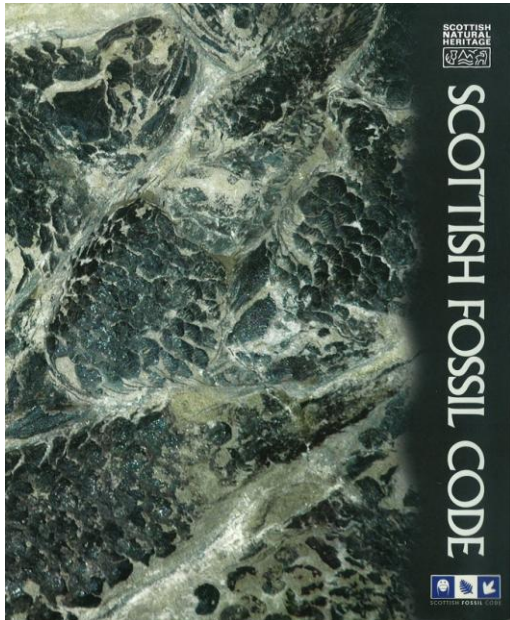


The Scottish Fossil Code

Theme 4 Conserving and managing our geodiversity

Objective 8 To share experience of conserving our geodiversity through the provision of good practice guidance



The Scottish Fossil Code was a long awaited response to perennial irresponsible fossil collecting that was affecting vulnerable fossil localities across Scotland. The damage being undertaken in the pursuit of fossils at some of Scotland's most vulnerable sites such as the Lesmahagow, Caithness and Orkney fish localities, and areas on Skye, merited action. Consequently, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 included provision for Scottish Natural Heritage to prepare the Scottish Fossil Code (SFC).

Work on the Code began in 2006 and was prepared by SNH with advice and contributions from an external grouping known as the 'Fossil Code Working Group' (FCWG), comprising geoconservationists researchers, museum curators, landowners and fossil collectors, both amateur and professional.

After two years of preparation and a public consultation the Code was launched in April 2008. The resulting SFC provides advice on best practice in the collection, identification, conservation and storage of fossil specimens found in Scotland. The Code was produced in paper format with an accompanying leaflet that outlines the 'essentials' of the Code. Both publications are available for download on the [SNH website](#).

Information on the full Code was distributed widely among other stakeholders, including museums, collectors and university departments. The Code was promoted in various journals and magazines, at conferences and on the UK's main fossil collecting website. Efforts were made to promote the Code in mainland Europe, with e-versions of the leaflet being produced in four foreign language versions (German, Dutch, French and Spanish) all of which are available to view and download from the SNH website.

The NCA also gave SNH the duty to review the Scottish Fossil Code from time to time, and if required revise it. The process of reviewing and revising the Code was discussed at meetings of the FCWG. It was considered that revision of the Code would be required if it was found that aspects of the Code and associated guidance

were found to be ineffective. Deficiencies in the effectiveness of the Code would be evident through an evaluation process which forms the core of the review process.

The first review of the SFC will be complete in 2012 four years from its launch. Early results indicate that rather than revising the Code as such, further work may be required to retarget the Code amongst certain sectors of the collecting community who still collect irresponsibly.

The 'essentials' of the Scottish Fossil Code:

If collecting fossils in Scotland, please do so responsibly and follow the advice on best practice in the collection and storage of fossil specimens outlined in the Scottish Fossil Code. The Code may be viewed and downloaded from: www.snh.gov.uk.

Seek permission - *You are acting within the law if you obtain permission to extract, collect and retain fossils.*

Access responsibly - *Consult the Scottish Outdoor Access Code prior to accessing land. Be aware that there are restrictions on access and collecting at some locations protected by statute.*

Collect responsibly - *Exercise restraint in the amount collected and the equipment used. Be careful not to damage fossils and the fossil resource. Record details of both the location and the rocks from which fossils are collected.*

Seek advice - *If you find an exceptional or unusual fossil do not try to extract it; but seek advice from an expert. Also seek help to identify fossils or dispose of an old collection.*

Label and look after - *Collected specimens should be labelled and taken good care of.*

Donate - *If you are considering donating a fossil or collection choose an Accredited museum, or one local to the collection area.*

<p>If you have an interest in Scottish palaeontology and have read the SFC or have experience of using it, SNH would be interested to hear your views as they may be useful for review purposes. Please contact colin.macfadyen@snh.gov.uk.</p>
