

Salvage of Skeletal Remains

(Note: Threatened and endangered remains are protected by law. It is illegal to collect or keep any portions of them without a federal or state permit).

Goals:

To demonstrate the process of collecting road kills for use in the classroom laboratory.

To model how study collections may be accumulated.

Objectives:

1. The student will learn how to safely handle dead animals.
 2. The student will observe and record the process of burying a dead animal.
 3. The student will exhume a buried carcass of a sea turtle, collect the remains, and document the process.
 4. The student will field prepare the skeletal elements to a clean status.
 5. The student will observe final preparation of skeletons for study.
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Materials:

1. Shovel
2. Trowel
3. 2" Brush
4. Zip Loc bags (quart size)
5. Bucket or Container

6. Magic Marker
 7. Notebook
 8. Camera and Film
 9. Safety Goggles or Glasses
 10. Rubber Gloves
 11. Chlorox Spray Bottle
 12. Mesh bag, mesh nylon cloth, etc.
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Procedure:

Burial

1. Document animal in notebook and photograph.
 2. Bag animal using rubber gloves and tools.
 3. Transport to burial site, remove from bag, and place marking material above and below (mesh bag, construction fence, etc.).
 4. Bury animal to about two feet depth in well-drained sandy soil (not near a well!). Colored flagging over the animal will mark top during excavation.
 5. Mark site with a numbered treated wood stake and a record sheet in a ziploc bag buried with the animal.
 6. Wait a year.
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Excavation

7. Excavate the buried animal carefully using small tools, first a shovel and then trowel. When skeletal elements are encountered use the paint brush to brush soil off bones trying to leave the skeleton in place.
8. Document the excavation photographically.

9. Remove skeletal elements as necessary, carefully bagging skeletal units together in ziploc bags (ie. right front leg, left front leg, etc.).
 10. Once the skeleton is collected, carefully sieve the soil remaining in the excavation and the soil removed from the excavation to prove no bones were missed.
 11. Wash and clean all instruments used.
 12. Clean your exposed skin with chlorox solution from the spray bottle and then wash well with soap and water. Treat any skin wounds or scratches with betadine or other disinfectant.
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Skeletal Preparation

13. Clean skeleton under running water.
 14. Soak in dilute hydrogen peroxide (about 1 pint to 5 gallons of water).
 15. Rinse bones in running water, allowing to soak for a few minutes.
 16. Air dry on a tray (in the sun if possible).
 17. Curate with collection data, photographs, etc.
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Time Frame: 4-5 hours
