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Science Buzz / Object of the Month

Target audience: General; families with children

Label type: Object

Science Museum of Minnesota

St. Paul, Minnesota

Label copy

A chance encounter, frozen in time

A clear blue morning. A broad desert, blooming after a spring rain. Two creatures scamper across the sand. Are they hunting? Fleeing? Simply looking for shade? They meet briefly, shuffle their feet, and move on.

Years pass—260 million of them. The sand turns to stone. A scientist walking the south rim of the Grand Canyon finds the long-forgotten footprints. He identifies the large tracks on the left as belonging to a lizard-like animal called *Laoporus* (lay-OP-er-us). But he doesn't recognize the prints on the right. He takes the rock back to The Science Museum, studies the tracks, and realizes they represent a new scorpion-like species, *Permichnium coconinensis* (per-MICK-nee-um co-co-nee-NEN-sis).

A bustling city. A cloudy November day. You stand in front of an exhibit case, staring at the fossil footprints, and imagining a chance meeting on a cool desert morning, so very long ago.

Fossil animal tracks

near Grand Canyon, Arizona

approx. 260 million years old

SMM P92.3.1



Praise from the Jurors

This label is a lovely experience in itself. Visitors might see the tracks on the fossil immediately and the first paragraph asks them to wonder, along with the scientists, what the animals might have been doing. The writing is vivid and manages to explicate the process of fossilization, as well as the process of discovery and analysis, in an immediate way that makes the viewer equal to the scientist in some ways.

— **Barbara Becker**

I think the *Science Buzz* label is worthy on two counts, first for evoking imagination and imagery, and second for inviting visitor participation (hello, museum 2.0).

— **Phyllis Rabineau**