

# Ancient Connecticut Climates

## Part 2

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In the previous article, we learned that ‘indicators’ preserved in Connecticut rocks can tell us what the climate might have been like 200 million years ago. We discovered that all of these ‘indicators’-ripple marks, raindrop impressions, mudcracks-tell us that there was water in Connecticut during this time and that the amount of water likely fluctuated-or changed over time.

We also see another clue: the footprints in our trackway. Let’s think about what happens when you make footprints-when do they look the best? Is it when you step in dry sand? What about when you step in a puddle? In both of these cases, those footprints wouldn’t show up so well. We need water to make footprints...but not too much...think about stepping in snow or wet sand. The same is true for animals, like dinosaurs. When we look at all the evidence that we find on our trackway, it is very clear that there was water in this spot 200 million years ago. Now, our trackway is completely dry, so we know the water didn’t stick around forever. We can think back to our clues to figure out when the water went away. We know that the process of rock formation takes a very long time. We also know that our tracks would not look as pristine if something disturbed them while they were drying up and hardening. From this evidence, scientists can speculate that the water left much closer to when the tracks were formed than to the modern-day.



Now that we’re experts at track formation and we know how these tracks got here, we have to answer our last unanswered question from our first article: why are there so many tracks here in this one place? At Dinosaur State Park, we have over 2500 tracks, with over 700 tracks exposed for scientists and visitors to study. With so many tracks here, we have a good idea about the types of animals that came through this area at about the same time. Scientists can’t match every track to a specific animal, but what we

do know is this: there are a lot of tracks; there is a lot of variety in the shape of tracks we see; and that tells us that there were more than one species and size of dinosaur in this area at the same time. Take a look at the footprint pictures on the side of the page and see what you can discover!



We know from our clues that there was an abundance of animals in the area. But think for a second. What would bring so many animals to this one place at the same time? Here’s a hint; what footprint making ingredient have we been talking all about in this

article? You got it! Water! We need to think about the different reasons that draw animals to water. What do you use water for? Animals, such as dinosaurs, have many of the same needs. Just like humans, they get thirsty. They may have also wanted to bathe, knew that plants would grow near the water, that food could be found there, or that a body of water was a good meeting place for other individuals. Think about watering holes of the modern-day such as those in Africa and the tropics, Connecticut’s environment may have been very similar to those locations 200 million years ago.



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**CCSS.ELA.Reading:**  
Informational Text: 3-5.2, 3-5.3, 3-5.8  
NGSS Connections: MS-ESS2-3 Earth’s Systems

