



Meteorite Gallery Highlights for Grade School Visits

1. Meteorites are rocks that fall from the sky. They get very hot as they slow down in the atmosphere and frequently become as bright as the full moon. They also make loud sonic booms in the sky as they fall. The surfaces of the meteorites get so hot that they melt; the melt later freezes to form a black crust.
2. The meteorites in cabinet 2 are called "chondrites." They are made of the same materials that formed the Earth and all the planets. Some of these chondrites have a black crust but the inside is white or light gray. The crusts of meteorites that were found long after they fell have turned brown because the metal has "rusted".
3. About 60,000 meteorites have been found. Most come from small planet-like bodies in space called "asteroids." About 400 come from the Moon and Mars. (You might ask the children how many have seen Mars in the sky). We have some meteorites from the Moon and Mars in cabinet 8.
4. The big meteorites near the center of the room are made of iron and nickel, much like the knives, spoons and forks you have at home. The Clark iron (center of room) is a piece of an iron asteroid the size of this building that hit the Earth 50,000 years ago. Most big iron meteorites come from the centers of asteroids that were once melted. The metal liquid was dense and sunk to the core. The Earth itself has a core made of iron – similar to this big meteorite.
5. The chunks of brown-green-black glass in cabinet 5 are called "tektites." They formed after large meteorites hit the Earth and melted soil at the Earth's surface. The large white and green chunks of glass – known as Libyan Desert Glass – formed the same way, but the stuff that melted was sand from the Sahara Desert.
6. A lot of people send us samples that they think might be meteorites, but most of the time, they are not. We call these rocks "meteor-wrongs." Some of them are in cabinet 7. They include iron ore, petrified wood, and volcanic rocks.