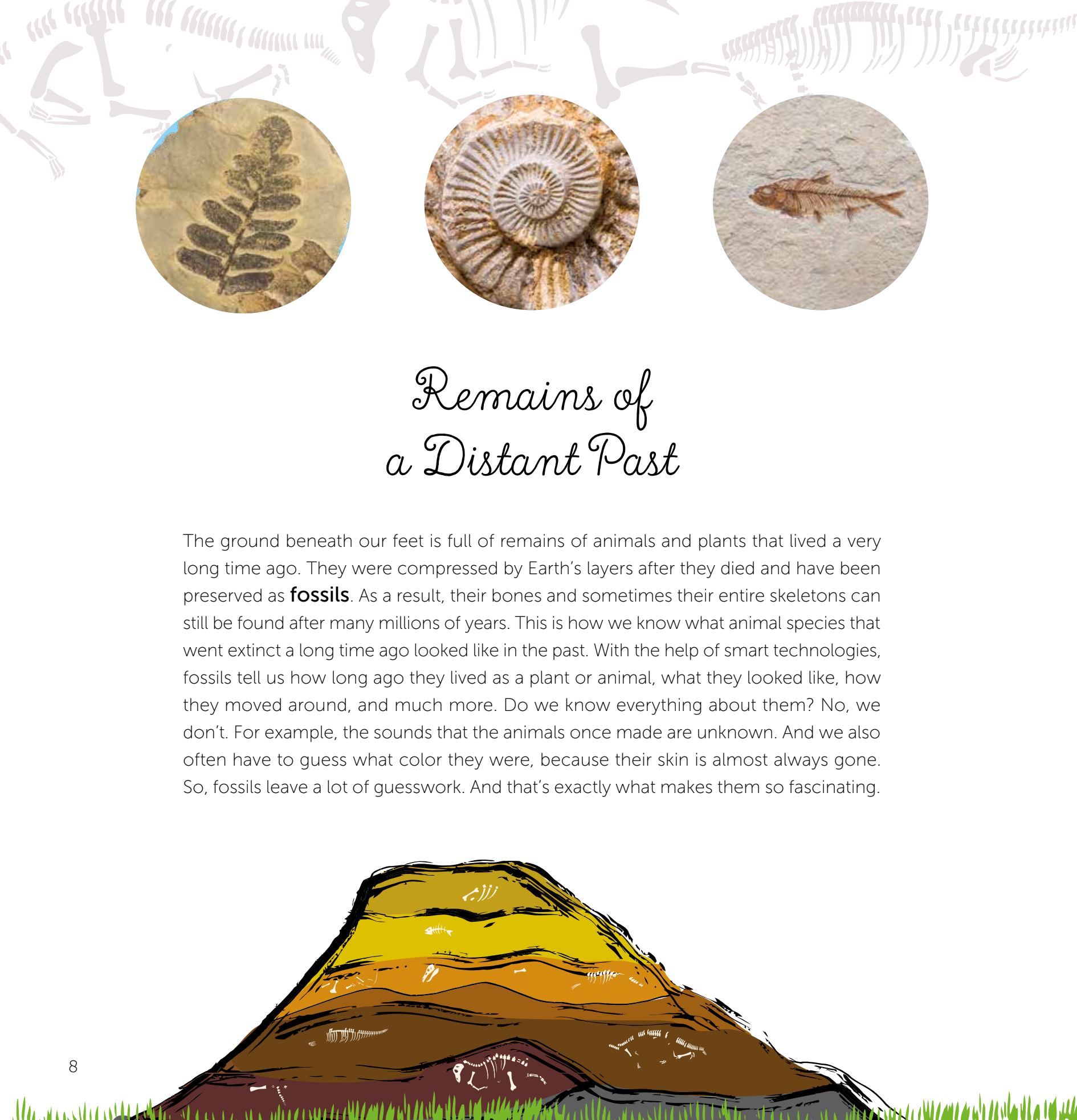


Life before the Dinosaurs

The dinosaurs were the largest animals that ever lived on land. Millions of years ago, they dominated life on our planet. But what was here before them? The Earth is about **4.5 billion years old**, and in that time, things have happened that are so bizarre they're hard to believe.

It all began when our planet collided with another planet. At that time, it was so hot that living things wouldn't survive here for a second. Then, it got so cold that the entire Earth turned into a snowball. Landscapes rose and disappeared into oceans. And amid all that chaos, life emerged. It developed into remarkably diverse forms: giant centipedes, sawfish, trees made of lichen, predatory fish with teeth that would frighten sharks, and lizard-like animals with sails on their backs . . . Welcome to the fascinating history of planet Earth.





Remains of a Distant Past

The ground beneath our feet is full of remains of animals and plants that lived a very long time ago. They were compressed by Earth's layers after they died and have been preserved as **fossils**. As a result, their bones and sometimes their entire skeletons can still be found after many millions of years. This is how we know what animal species that went extinct a long time ago looked like in the past. With the help of smart technologies, fossils tell us how long ago they lived as a plant or animal, what they looked like, how they moved around, and much more. Do we know everything about them? No, we don't. For example, the sounds that the animals once made are unknown. And we also often have to guess what color they were, because their skin is almost always gone. So, fossils leave a lot of guesswork. And that's exactly what makes them so fascinating.

