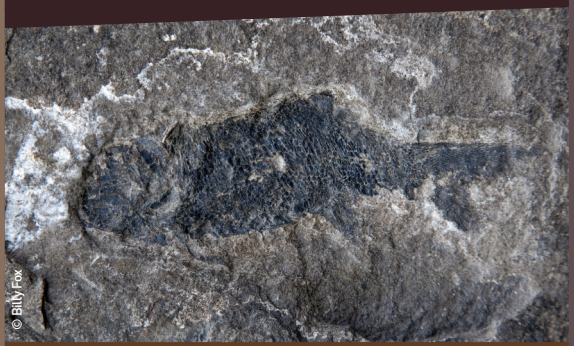
# Introduction

Dune Sandstones, Exnaboe

Take a look into the interior of an ancient continent. Discover how rivers, deserts and lakes each produced their own characteristic rock types and structures.

These six trails explore the variety of rocks laid down in the South Shetland **Basin** and the environments in which they formed.





Fossil fish, Exnaboe

370 million years ago, the **Old Red Sandstone** lowlands would have been a barren place of shifting sands and seasonal floods. Plants had hardly begun to colonise the land and the ground would have been bare, apart from fringes of strange green vegetation along riversides and lake margins. The land may have been empty, but the lakes teemed with life, including strange fish that were ancestors of the amphibians and reptiles, and so ultimately of humans too.

## How to use this guide

The entire trail will take around two days to complete by car. Individual location maps show you how to reach each of the trail sites by car or bike. Details about public transport are given where appropriate. OS Grid references are given.

## Keep safe

- Shetland's weather is very changeable so be prepared for bad weather, with warm, waterproof clothing, sturdy footwear, food and hot drinks.
- Check the weather forecast before going out and heed local advice.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back.
- Terns and skuas defend their nests by 'dive-bombing' intruders. To deter them, hold one arm above your head and carefully move out of the area.

## Glossary

A glossary is included on each trail card. The first instance of each word defined in the glossary is in bold. Glossary terms are not repeated on subsequent cards, so it may be necessary to refer back to previous cards for definitions.

**Braided River:** a network of shallow river channels separated by shifting sandbanks.

**Old Red Sandstone**: a thick sequence of rocks (formed between 416 million and 359 million years ago) that occurs in north-western Europe, Scandinavia, Greenland, and north-eastern Canada.

**Basin**: a large, low-lying area where sediments accumulate and form sedimentary rocks.


Key to symbols