West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey

Colloquium Series

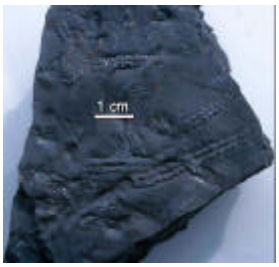
Presenting

Ron McDowell, Ph.D.

Date: **Monday Dec 3rd, 2007**
Place: **Large Conference Room**
Refreshments: **maybe**
Presentation: **Begins at Noon**

Ichnofossils*

Ichnofossils (trace fossils) have been "officially" recognized since the 1820's. The most easily identifiable trace fossils are dinosaur footprints; in general, trace fossils come in all sizes and shapes. Trace fossils are biogenic (made by animals or plants) sedimentary structures and are formally named just like animals and plants using *Genus* and *Species*. Some trace fossil workers (like your speaker) choose to minimize this formal naming process. Instead, they rely on an informal classification of trace fossils based on their shape, the behaviour they represent, or the environment in which they formed. This leaves a lot more time to concentrate on interpreting what the trace fossils actually "mean" (we call this "ciphering"). Because trace fossils are sedimentary structures, they are a product of the environmental condition present when the sediments containing them were deposited. Consequently, identifying trace fossils and interpreting their depositional and environmental data can lead to lucrative rewards including, but not limited to, pizza and beer!



* - Pronounced, "Ick! No fossils!"