Shark Whorls

Helicoprion is an extinct fish also known as the whorl tooth shark. The fossils show more than 150 teeth arranged in a perfect spiral the size of a dinner plate or larger. *Helicoprion* fossils have been found all over the world in marine rocks that are 270 million years old, including the phosphate rocks mined in our region. Owing largely to a century of active mining, Idaho boasts the greatest number of Helicoprion specimens in the world, 30 of which are at the Idaho Museum of Natural History.

Possible topics of discussion:

- How does the structure of this jaw help it function efficiently?
- How have species changed over time?
- Why are marine fossils found in Idaho?
- How do scientists reconstruct the past using fossil evidence?

Additional Resources:

- National Geographic Idaho's Buzzsaw Sharks
- LiveScience Idaho Was Once Swarming with Ancient Buzz-Saw-Faced Sharks

Performance Standards

4th Grade	5th Grade	Middle School	High School
4-ESS-1.1. Identify evidence from patterns in rock formations and fossils in rock layers for changes in a landscape over time to support an explanation for changes in a landscape over time.	5-LS-2.1. Analyze and interpret data from fossils to provide evidence of the organisms and the environments in which they lived long ago.	MS-LS-4.1. Analyze and interpret data for patterns in the fossil record that document the existence, diversity, extinction, and change of life forms throughout the history of life on Earth under the assumption that natural laws operate today as in the past.	HS-LS-4.1. Communicate scientific information that common ancestry and biological evolution are supported by multiple lines of empirical evidence.