

National Fossil Day in Iran: A Report on Activities in 2017

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Introduction

The National fossil Day (NFD) was first established in the United States (October 13, 2010) to endorse the value of fossils in science and education. Since that time, different partners including research institutions, universities, museums and other groups come together to share their activities and celebrate the NFD in the United States. Recently, the International Palaeontological Association (IPA), as the coordinator of international cooperation and activities in palaeontology, promotes the NFD and has invited museums, universities and other scientific institutions of the world to celebrate this day. The Iranian Paleontological Society (IPS), as a member of IPA, acknowledged this event by celebrating and promoting the importance of fossils and actions on their protection for people on October, 25, 2017.

Activities

Here is a brief report on the activities during the celebration of the National Fossil Day in Iran:

- The committee of the Iranian Paleontological Society allocated 25th of October as the National Fossil Day in Iran for the first time.
- The IPS committee sent announcements to Iranian institutes, universities, museums, companies, schools, and individuals inviting them to celebrate this event by any related activities including lectures, field excursions, contests, demonstrations, special exhibitions, etc.
- The IPS committee designed and made a logo (Fig. 1) for this day using an endemic Iranian brachiopod *Jafarirhynchus alatus* Popov, Hairapetian, Ghobadi Pour & Modzalevskaya, 2015 (family Jafarirhynchidae) from the Silurian (Telychian) Boghu Formation, of the Kashmar area, east-central Iran. This brachiopod was named after Professor Mohammad-Ali Jafarian (1935–2013) in appreciation of his valuable contributions to the Palaeozoic palaeontology and stratigraphy of Iran. In the logo, *Jafarirhynchus alatus* with alate shape of the shell recalling the ancient Iranian symbol Faravahar present in the fossil.



Figure 1. The logo for Iranian National Fossil Day (NFD) using *Jafarirhynchus alatus* Popov et al., 2015 from the Silurian (Telychian) Boghu Formation, of the Kashmar area, east-central Iran.

- In the Geology Department of the University of Zanjan, there was a presentation on the history of the NFD in the world and a report on some new discoveries in Iranian Palaeontology (Fig. 2). They also exhibited some rare, unique fossils from Iran to the students.
- The Iranian Geological Survey, the north-eastern branch in Mashhad, celebrated the NFD and awarded the palaeontology staff.
- There were special notes and articles published in some Iranian newspapers and journals about the National Fossil Day, Palaeontology and the necessity of having such a day in the country.
- In the Golestan University, the NFD was celebrated by several activities. A lecture on Palaeontology in the Golestan Province was presented for the students (Fig. 3). The Student Association of Geology performed an exhibition in the Golestan University introducing Palaeontology to the visitors by presenting posters, as well as some macro- and microfossils (Fig. 3) and distributing booklets entitled Palaeontology for everybody. In the afternoon, there was a special exhibition in the Gorgan Geology Museum (Amethyst Gallery) celebrating the NFD.
- The activity of the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad during the NFD included a few field excursions for the students to the Kopet-Dagh fossiliferous outcrops (Fig. 4), and a scientific tour to the Prof. Bazima's Scientific Park, Mashhad, introducing Palaeontology and fossil values

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to the general audience and demonstrating various ways of fossilisation in the lab of the park.



Figure 2. University of Zanjan, a public presentation on the history of the NFD and demonstration of some new discoveries in Iranian Palaeontology. Photos courtesy of Majid Mirzaie Ataabadi.



Figure 4. Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, filed excursions to the Kopet-Dagh fossiliferous outcrops. Photos courtesy of Abbas Ghaderi and Javad Saadat-Nejhad.

- Finally, the committee of the Iranian Paleontological Society acknowledged the contributions of the institutions and individuals who organized and supervised the activities during the NFD by sending them award certificates.

References

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Figure3. Golestan University, a public lecture on ‘Palaeontology in the Golestan Province’, and an exhibition presenting posters, fossils and rocks. Photos courtesy of Hadi Jahangir.