



Cornell **CAU**  
**Education Vacations**

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Dear Participants,

Welcome, Historians of Life and Earth!

I am writing to welcome you to this year's version of CAU's exploration of the history of the Earth and its life, as revealed by the amazing geology, paleontology, and natural history of our area: "Gorgeous Gorges." From July 17-21, we will be hiking and exploring gorges and other outcrops around Ithaca, collecting and identifying fossils, and exploring the ancient world(s) that they reveal – 380 million years ago when a warm shallow sea covered what is now central New York State. We will spend plenty of time outside but will also visit the Museum of the Earth, which is part of the Paleontological Research Institution (PRI), where we'll have an opportunity to see and talk more about the Devonian geology and fossils of the gorges, and we'll use some of the millions of fossil specimens housed there for comparison with what we find. We'll relate all this long-ago stuff to the natural history of the modern Finger Lakes region, which we will also explore at PRI's Cayuga Nature Center just a few miles up the lake.

It will be a week of modest exercise, incredible beauty, and an array of plants and animals from tiny to tremendous, from exquisite to ruggedly impressive, from just born to more than 380 million years old. What must you bring to the week? Only moderate physical vigor and a hunger to explore, observe and wonder. If you have only a limited knowledge of fossils, geology, or the flora and fauna of the Ithaca area, no problem. We will give you ample time for examination, and pace our hike to your own physical limits and comfort. We will not be deterred by what some would call "inclement" weather (what Ithacans just call "weather"). Rather, we will dress accordingly, seek adequate shelter when the weather is downright disagreeable.

You will need comfortable walking shoes (old running shoes or hiking shoes), comfortable shirt and light jacket, and a day pack for lunch. Although we have not found the need for insect repellent in the past, we are once again being warned about Lyme disease in central New York this year, so you should take reasonable precautions against ticks. First-aid kit? I'll have one just in case. A pair of binoculars may be of considerable help in viewing birds. But no other optical aids are needed. Poison ivy? We'll identify it early, and you'll know to avoid it. The week will be informal, informational, fun, and restoring. You'll surely wish it were longer!

Enjoy and I look forward to seeing you in July!

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& Hunter R. Rawlings III Professor of Paleontology,  
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