Four Footprints Show a T. rex on the Move

A rare row of tracks helps scientists picture how a giant dinosaur walked.



Four large three-toed dinosaur footprints appear in stone on a sloped rocky hillside.

Four fossilized footprints are giving scientists a rare look at how an adult Tyrannosaurus rex moved. According to **Science** News Explores, the prints are likely the first known **trackway** from an adult T. rex. A trackway means three or more footprints in a row. That matters because one footprint is like one still photo. A row of prints is more like a short movie.

The trackway was found in North Dakota by Kent Hups, a high school teacher and paleontologist. A paleontologist is a scientist who studies **ancient** life. Hups was **fossil** hunting last year when he noticed a huge three-toed print. It stuck out from a steep **hillside**. The print was 80 centimeters, or 31.5 inches, across. He thought it had to be from T. rex.

The footprints were not open holes anymore. Mud had filled the old prints, hardened, and turned into fossil rock. Later, softer rock around them wore away. That left the filled-in footprints standing out. This is a little like mud drying around a shoeprint after recess. The difference is time. These prints were left about 66.5 million years ago.

The scientists used the spaces between the steps to **estimate** speed. Estimate means make a careful answer from clues. They figured the animal moved about 1.6 meters each second. That would feel like a quick walk for a person. It does not show a chase. It shows an enormous animal walking along, placing one foot after another.

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The team cannot be completely sure the maker was T. rex. The footprints are not perfectly preserved, which means some details were damaged or lost. But the toes were slender. Fossils from the same area also point to T. rex. Peter Falkingham, another paleontologist on the team, said T. rex is the best match with what scientists know now.

Better tracks could answer even more questions. They might show whether the foot landed flat or rolled from toe to heel. They might show how the pads under the foot held the animal's weight. There may even be another footprint still hidden in the hill. The team is waiting for **weather** to wear away more rock. Sometimes science moves at a walking pace too.

Written from reporting by Science News Explores.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. **Why can a row of footprints tell scientists more than one footprint by itself?**

   > **A strong answer:** A strong answer should compare a single clue with a pattern of clues and explain how movement can be inferred.

2. **Should scientists wait for nature to uncover more of the hill, or should they dig sooner? Defend your choice.**

   > **A strong answer:** A strong answer should weigh patience and protection against the chance to learn more quickly.

3. **What information is still missing before scientists can feel more certain about how this T. rex walked?**

   > **A strong answer:** A strong answer should discuss limits of the evidence, such as track quality, foot placement, and hidden prints.

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S T H F O S S I L D L D

C L M W L A E C E R H H

E A H I L L S I D E T S

A N C I E N T O A M R C

N I E L T F I S S S S I

C M E I L R M T A R T E

S I E S W E A T H E R N

E E A A S C T C A A T C

Y E E N U H E T K N C E

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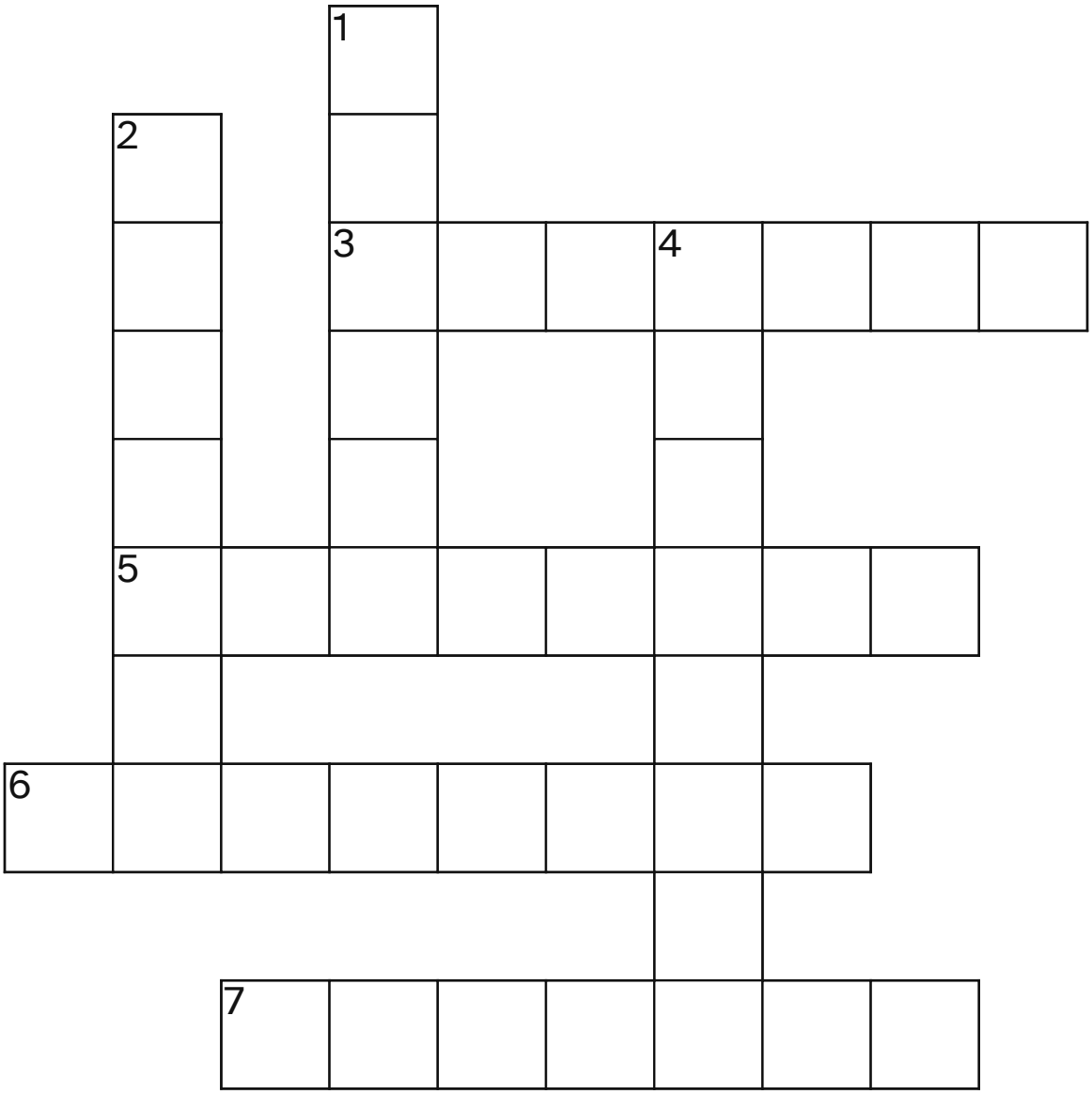
T S M C L O D I T F L Y

ANCIENT ESTIMATE FOSSIL HILLSIDE SCIENCE

TRACKWAY WEATHER

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ACROSS

3 Study of nature using questions and evidence

5 Sloping side of raised land

6 Row of three or more prints left by a creature

7 Very old and from long ago

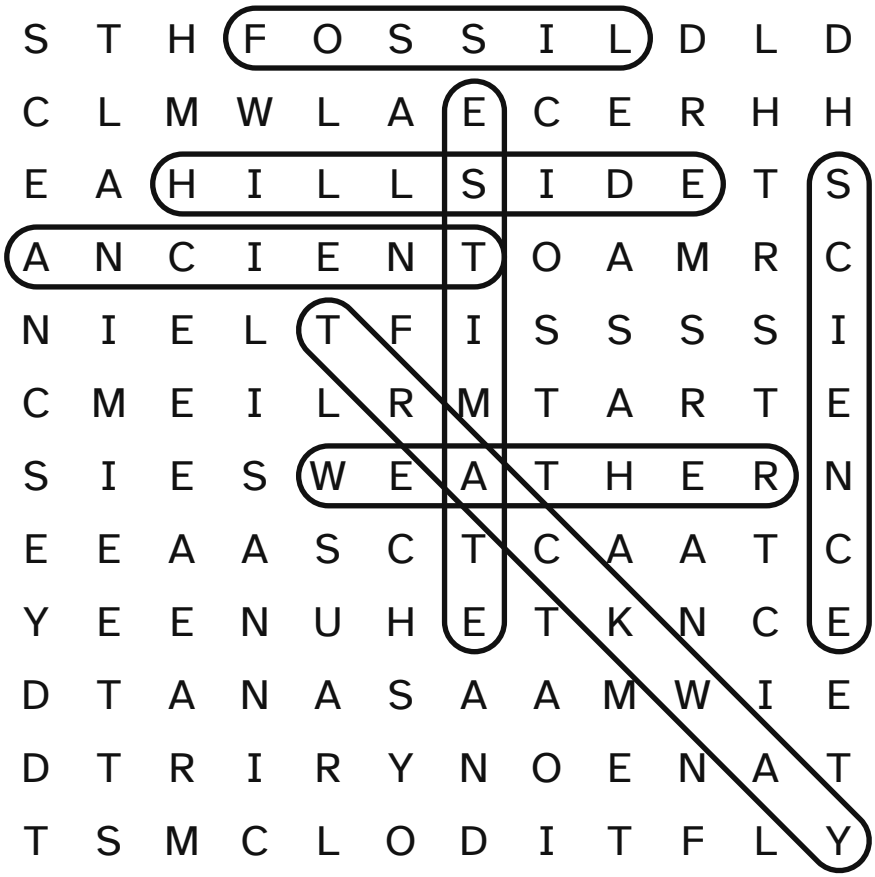
DOWN

1 Rock or remains showing life from long ago

2 Rain, wind, sunshine, and other outdoor conditions

4 Careful guess based on clues, not exact measuring

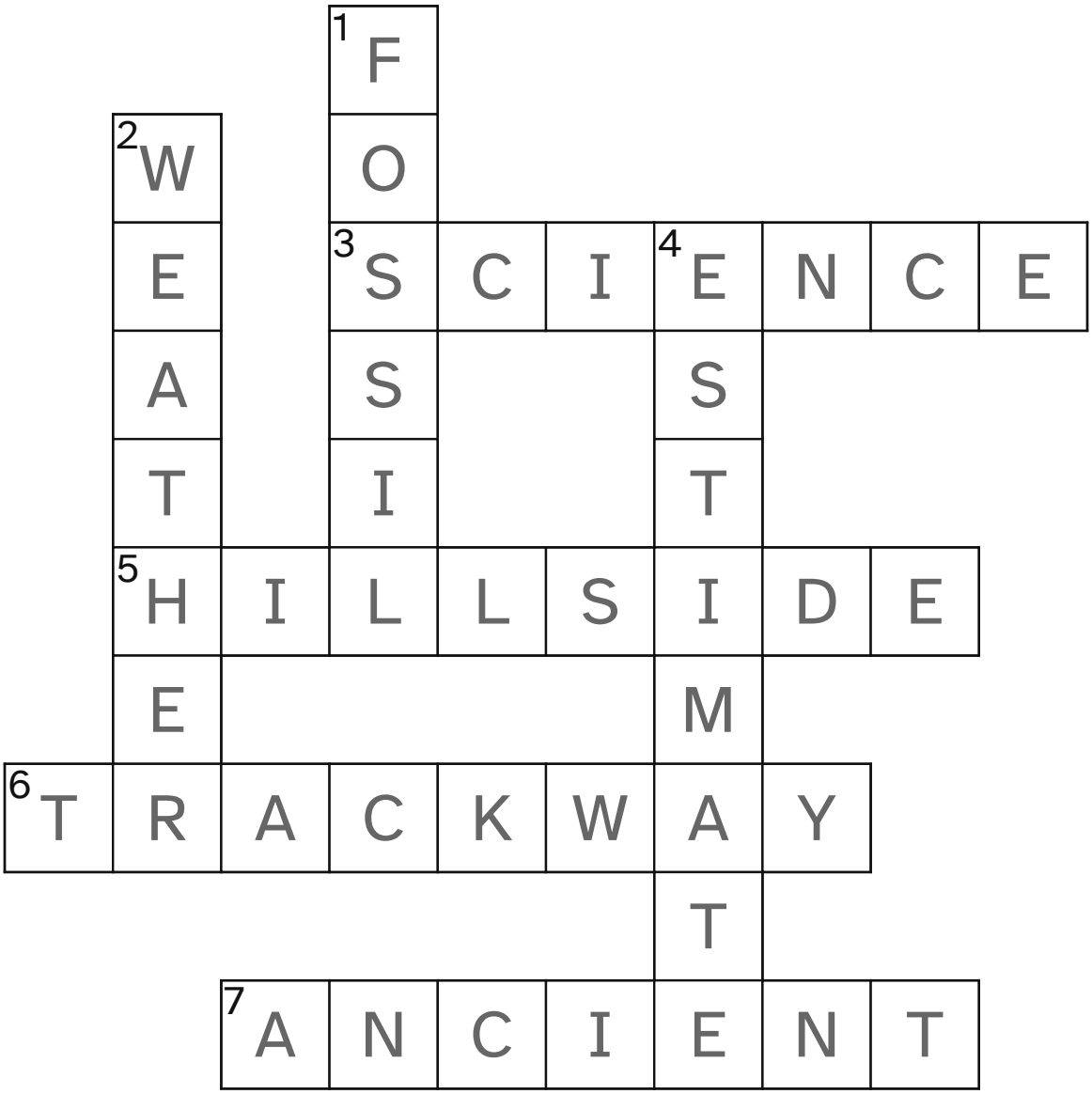
Four Footprints Show a T. rex on the Move — answer key



ANCIENT ESTIMATE FOSSIL HILLSIDE SCIENCE TRACKWAY WEATHER

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Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

Science News Explores

"Four T. rex footprints hint at how fast it traveled"

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https://www.snexplores.org/article/footprints-how-fast-t-rex-walked

WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET

The article with a note on each question, a word search, a crossword, and the answer key to both.

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