

YZC Animal of the Month, October 2010

Silvanerpeton miripedes



For October's Animal of the Month we are travelling back in time. Way back in time. To a time before humans, a time before dinosaurs... Back to the

Carboniferous – around 330 million years ago – and a place near Edinburgh called East Kirkton. (Ok, you don't actually have to go that far to see this month's animal. It is on display in central case in the lower gallery of the museum...) This fossil site is important as a snapshot it gives of a community of land plants and animals early in the Carboniferous.

Silvanerpeton miripedes is one of many animals found at East Kirkton. It is a fossil tetrapod. Every vertebrate that has arms and legs with fingers and toes rather than fins are tetrapods. We are tetrapods, as are frogs, dinosaurs, birds, elephants,

snakes, whales, hippos... the list goes on. *Silvanerpeton* belongs to a group of fossil tetrapods called the Anthracosaurs. Scientists are interested in these animals because they are thought to be related to the Amniotes - the living group of tetrapods that includes the birds, reptiles and mammals.

The meaning of the name *Silvanerpeton miripedes* is rather beautiful. *Silvanerpeton* means 'wood crawler', and refers to Stan Wood, the collector who found this fossil. The species name *miripedes* means 'wonderful feet'. Just a glimpse of the fossils shows you why we call it this – their feet are amazing! You can see the individual bones preserved white against the dark background of the rock.

Visit the museum to see the wood crawler with the wonderful feet for yourself, and discover more animals from East Kirkton, our window onto life on land 330 million years ago.