


karats



FOSSIL KNIGHTIA

Location: Fossil Butte National Monument, Southwest Wyoming
Age: 60 million years old

Knightsia are fossils of the Eocene age. They are a relative of the modern salt water herring. This fish lived in the Green River System which was made up of three fresh water lakes: Lake Uinta, Lake Gosiute and Fossil Lake. These are now the Fossil Butte National Monument. Judging by the large number of fossilized specimens found there, it is assumed to have been an ideal habitat for fish and other aquatic life. When the fish died and eventually settled to the bottom, their remains were covered by a fine deposit of silt which preserved every outline of the fish, capturing the most minute details. Each year the deposit of silt became thicker. Eventually the layers became the solid stone of the Green River formation. The tremendous pressure of the layers transformed the fish into fossil. Later the layers of Fossil Lake were raised hundreds of meters. The heavy tilting, heaving and buckling usually associated with mountain building was not associated with this shift and saved the fossils from destruction. Each Knightsia is an example of how fossils are created through the earth's changes.