

DINOSAURS OF NEW MEXICO: A POPULAR GUIDE

SPENCER G. LUCAS¹ and ANDREW B. HECKERT²

¹New Mexico Museum of Natural History, 1801 Mountain Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104;

²Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131

INTRODUCTION

This article provides information on the popular side of New Mexico's dinosaurs. It summarizes dinosaur exhibits in New Mexico (Fig. 1), provides advice on collecting dinosaur fossils in the state and lists key published books that contain information on New Mexico's dinosaurs.

NEW MEXICO MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND SCIENCE

Location: Albuquerque, next to Old Town, at 1801 Mountain Road N.W.

Hours: Every day, 9AM-5PM, except Christmas days and non-holiday Mondays in the months of January and September.

Fees: Admission to the Museum is adults \$5, seniors \$4 and children \$2. Additional fees are charged for the large-format theater and planetarium.

Telephone: (505) 841-2800.

Exhibit space: Approximately 65,000 square feet.

Dinosaur exhibits: The Museum has entire halls devoted to the Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods, and is currently constructing a Triassic hall. A life-size bronze restoration of New Mexico's State Fossil, the Triassic dinosaur *Coelophysis*, is on display, as are mounted skeletons (casts) of the Jurassic dinosaurs *Allosaurus*, *Camarasaurus* and *Stegosaurus*. The Jurassic Hall also features a huge mural of New Mexico's Late Jurassic dinosaurs by world-famous artist Ely Kish. The Cretaceous Hall includes life-sized models of the duck-billed dinosaur *Parasaurolophus* and many other Cretaceous dinosaur items. Numerous dinosaur bones are usually on display in the fossil preparation exhibit Fossilworks as well. Bronze models of the Cretaceous dinosaurs *Albertosaurus* and *Pentaceratops* by noted dinosaur sculptor David Thomas grace the newly reconstructed main entrance.

The Museum also has a website (www.museums.state.nm.us/nmmnh) with extensive information on New Mexico's dinosaurs.

MESALANDS DINOSAUR MUSEUM

Location: Tucumcari, 222 East Laughlin St.

Hours: Summer (15 March-15 October), 9AM-5PM, Tuesday through Saturday; Winter, 12PM-5PM, Tuesday through Saturday.

Fees: Adults \$5, children \$2.50.

Telephone: (505) 461-DINO.

Exhibit Space: Approximately 10,000 square feet.

Dinosaur Exhibits: Dinosaurs from the entire Mesozoic, especially bronze casts of bones, are featured. Included are a life-size skeleton (cast) of the Jurassic meat-eater *Torvosaurus*, a life-size model of the Cretaceous meat-eater *Acrocanthosaurus* by noted dinosaur sculptor David Thomas, and bronze casts of the skulls of *Triceratops* and *Tyrannosaurus*.

DINOSAUR DISCOVERY MUSEUM (CLOSED IN 2000)

Location: Grants, just south of I-40 at Exit 85.

Hours: (CLOSED IN 2000) Summer (June-August), 9AM-6PM, Winter, 10AM-5PM.

Fees: Adults \$5.50, seniors \$4.50, children \$3.50.

Telephone: (505) 287-5558.

Exhibit Space: Approximately 14,000 square feet.

Dinosaur Exhibits: Features robotic dinosaur models, including the Jurassic dinosaur *Dilophosaurus* and the Cretaceous dinosaurs *Triceratops*, *Pachycephalosaurus*, *Tyrannosaurus* and *Utahraptor*.

RUTH HALL MUSEUM OF PALEONTOLOGY

Location: Ghost Ranch Conference Center, on US Highway 84 approximately 30 miles north of Española.

Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 9AM-12PM and 1-5 PM; June through September also open Sundays, 1-5 PM.

Fees: None, but a \$2 donation per visitor is suggested.

Telephone: (505) 685-4333.

Exhibit Space: Approximately 1200 square feet.

Dinosaur Exhibits: Features preparation of a block containing numerous skeletons of the Triassic dinosaur and New Mexico State Fossil *Coelophysis*, collected at the world-famous Ghost Ranch dinosaur quarry. Other exhibits feature the history of collecting at the nearby quarry, Late Triassic environments and other aspects of the Ranch's paleontology.

CLAYTON LAKE STATE PARK

Location: About 12 miles north of Clayton on NM High-



FIGURE 1. Map of New Mexico showing location of museums and parks where New Mexico's dinosaurs are on display.

way 370.

Hours: Open all year.

Fees: \$4 per vehicle.

Telephone: (505) 374-8808.

Exhibit Space: Outdoor exhibit; camping facilities available.

Dinosaur Exhibits: The spillway of the dam exposes approximately 300 dinosaur tracks of Early Cretaceous age. Interpretive signage allows the visitor to study closely one of the nation's few publicly accessible dinosaur tracksites.

GEOLOGY MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Location: Albuquerque, Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences, Northrop Hall, University of New Mexico, near Yale and Central intersection.

Hours: Monday-Friday 8AM-12 PM, 1-4 PM.

Fees: Free admission.

Telephone: (505) 277-4204.

Exhibit Space: Approximately 1600 square feet.

Dinosaur Exhibits: Some Triassic and Cretaceous dinosaur bones are part of this small, teaching museum.

COLLECTING DINOSAURS IN NEW MEXICO

Many people want to know how they can collect dinosaur fossils in New Mexico. Most of the land in New Mexico belongs to either the Federal Government (especially the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service), Native American peoples or to the State of New Mexico. You cannot legally collect dinosaur fossils from these lands without permission from the agency (or tribe) that manages (owns) the land. Normally, permission is not granted to private citizens, but instead is given to public institutions, such as museums and universities, that not only have the professional expertise and equipment to collect the dinosaur fossils, but will keep those fossils in a public collection to be used for exhibition, education and research.

Dinosaur fossils found on privately-owned lands in New Mexico are the property of the landowner. They can be collected by anybody with the landowner's consent.

If you want to collect dinosaur fossils in New Mexico, you do best to contact one of the museums listed above. Most museums run volunteer programs that allow participants to help the museum collect dinosaur fossils—indeed, volunteers have discovered and/or excavated many of the specimens described in this book.

BOOKS ON NEW MEXICO'S DINOSAURS

Almost any popular dinosaur book contains some information on New Mexican dinosaurs. However, for detailed information on New Mexico's dinosaurs consult the website of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science and the following books:

Kues, B. S., 1982, *Fossils of New Mexico*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.

Lucas, S. G., 1993, *Dinosaurs of New Mexico*. Albuquerque, New Mexico Academy of Science.

Lucas, S. G., and Heckert, A. B., eds., 2000, *Dinosaurs of New Mexico: New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science Bulletin 17*.

Lucas, S. G. and Zidek, J., eds., 1993, *Vertebrate paleontology in New Mexico: New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science Bulletin 2*.

Other books that prominently feature New Mexican dinosaurs include:

Colbert, E.H., 1995, *The little dinosaurs of Ghost Ranch*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Lockley, M.G., and Hunt, A.P., 1995, *Dinosaur tracks and other fossil footprints of the western United States*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Lucas, S.G., 2000, *Dinosaurs: The textbook (third edition)*. Boston, McGraw Hill.