

## Colorado Company Servicing Dinosaur from Wyoming

Local paleontological company Triebold Paleontology, Inc. of Woodland Park, CO has taken on a project of huge proportions. A project almost 80 feet long and weighing over 4 tons.

TPI staff members recently dismantled the 80 foot *Apatosaurus* fossil (formerly known as *Brontosaurus*) that has been mounted and displayed in the University of Wyoming Geological Museum for almost 50 years. A sauropod dinosaur that roamed the plains of Wyoming and Colorado over 150 million years ago, this *Apatosaurus* is one of only six on display in the world, according to museum director Brent Breithaupt. "This display was originally established by Samuel H. Knight in 1960," stated Breithaupt. "This is our first opportunity to update and stabilize the fossil since the original mounting."

The *Apatosaurus* was originally found in 1901 by members of a Carnegie Museum expedition from Pittsburgh, PA. Many dinosaurs found in Wyoming and Colorado at the turn of the century went to the large museums on the East coast. Carnegie Museum decided not to mount this skeleton and it was in storage for 50 years. A fossil exchange brought the specimen home to Wyoming.

TPI will be repairing and stabilizing the specimen using modern day techniques. "It's amazing seeing the different types of materials used 50-100 years ago," stated Anthony Maltese, TPI curator. "They used plaster, paint, and cement matrix among other things to hold the bones together. Today's glues and chemicals will make the specimen much more stable." The original fossil is about 60 percent complete. "We will have the opportunity to remake the cast parts of the specimen using polyurethane, which is much lighter than plaster and make the pieces more bonelike in appearance," Maltese added.

The dismantling project will also give researchers worldwide a chance to study the specimen up close. "The fossil will be available for viewing at the TPI labs in Woodland Park while our staff is restoring, molding and casting the original fossil," according to Maltese. "When we remount the specimen, the individual pieces will be removable for future study at UW."

TPI will be making molds of the specimen while in their labs. A complete cast of the skeleton will be available for sale to other facilities. "A large part of our business, in addition to collecting and restoring fossils, is to make copies of the originals," stated Tracie Bennitt, Marketing and Sales Coordinator for TPI. "There is only one original in only one location. With quality cast copies of the original fossils, many more people are able to enjoy seeing the dinosaurs up close and personal."

The first cast is being purchased for the new Tellus: Northwest Georgia Science Museum, formerly the Weinman Mineral Museum. "The *Apatosaurus* will be exhibited in the Great Hall of the new museum," according to Executive Director Jose Santamaria. "We are excited to be the recipients of the first copy and to have played a role in the restoration of this fabulous specimen." Tellus is being built on the site of the Weinman Mineral Museum in Cartersville, GA, which will officially close July 31, 2007 for the transition to take place. Information on the new 130,000 sq. ft. facility, which opens in 2008, can be found at [www.tellusmuseum.org](http://www.tellusmuseum.org).

Making cast copies is a complex business. Attention to detail is important, as well as collaborating with paleontologists and scientists around the world when restoring specimens to their original greatness. "Many times you only have part of a specimen to work with. All those blank areas have to be filled in to create the full 3-D skeleton," Bennitt said. "Getting feedback from specialists around the world helps us create the most scientifically accurate specimens available."

Even this *Apatosaurus* has a history of change. Breithaupt replaced the head with a correct *Apatosaurus* skull in 1981. Research done by paleontologists from the Carnegie Museum in the 1970s showed that the traditional skull of *Apatosaurus* was incorrect. All museums that had this dinosaur on display had to change the heads on their skeletons. When the first restoration was done of this dinosaur in the 1880s, various bones from a *Camarasaurus* were used as models for the missing bones. Continued scientific research on this dinosaur

resulted in correcting the mistakes made in the late 1800s. In addition, to the changing of the head was correcting the name. Although often called *Brontosaurus*, this dinosaur was first named *Apatosaurus*. As such, *Apatosaurus* is the correct name for this dinosaur. "As time goes on, other specimens could be changed and updated as well. That's the science of paleontology!" Bennitt stated.

TPI is located at 201 S. Fairview in Woodland Park, CO. The work on the *Apatosaurus* is visible thru viewing windows in the Rocky Mountain Dinosaur Resource Center, home of the TPI labs. For more information visit the website at [www.rmdrc.com](http://www.rmdrc.com) or [www.trieboldpaleontology.com](http://www.trieboldpaleontology.com) or call 719-686-1820. The University of Wyoming Geological Museum web site can be visited at [www.uwyo.edu/geomuseum](http://www.uwyo.edu/geomuseum).

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