

Footprints verify existence of 'new' dinos in region

Study on trackways reveals presence of at least four different types of dinosaur

News Release

February 25, 2013 — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GRANDE PRAIRIE – A recently-published study by Grande Prairie-based palaeontologists has revealed even greater diversity amongst the dinosaurs that lived in the Peace Country than previously known.

Footprints discovered in the region belong to at least four different types of dinosaur, including Tyrannosaurs, medium-sized theropods (meat-eating dinosaurs,) duck-billed hadrosaurs and armoured ankylosaurs, as well as a variety of tiny prints that may belong to prehistoric mammals and amphibians.

This was revealed in 'A diverse, high-latitude ichnofauna from the Late Cretaceous Wapiti Formation, Alberta, Canada,' by PCDI head palaeontologist Dr. Phil Bell, PCDI palaeontology assistant Robin Sissons and Italian geologist Federico Fanti, published in early February in the journal *Cretaceous Research*.

It provides another glimpse into the great diversity that existed in this region of northwest Alberta tens of millions of years ago.

"The track record in the Peace Region shows us a different snapshot of the Cretaceous community, as we get different kinds of animals leaving footprints than those leaving skeletons," said Sissons.

The footprints, which were found over a period of 20 years by researchers and volunteers, come from the Wapiti Formation and are between 70 and 73 million years old. While the tracks had been known for years, it is only now that they have been identified.

"As the identity of the track-maker is revealed in the footprint, they are useful tools for studying ancient ecology," said Dr. Bell. "We're excited because they add to the search image of what species we might expect to find as skeletons.

The Peace Region is one of the most diverse footprint sites in Alberta – more spectacular than even well-known palaeontologically-rich areas such as Drumheller and Dinosaur Provincial Park.

"The great thing about footprints is that they show you exactly where that animal walked when it was alive – it shows behaviour, not just dead bones," said Dr. Bell.

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About the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum and the Pipestone Creek Dinosaur Initiative

The Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum, scheduled to open its doors in Summer 2014, will be a 41,000 sq. foot, world-class facility highlighting the rich fossil resources of Northern Alberta. Named for Dr. Philip Currie, Canada's preeminent palaeontologist, the museum, located in Wembley AB will serve as a hub of education and science in the area. The Pipestone Creek Dinosaur Initiative is the omnibus term for the project team tasked with the realization of the museum.

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