

Posted on Tue, Mar. 17, 2009

## In north Arlington, students unearth remnants of the dinosaur era

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RICHARDSON — Less than 5 miles from the futuristic Dallas Cowboys football stadium, University of Texas at Arlington students are digging up fossils of prehistoric turtles, sharks, giant crocodiles and duck-billed dinosaurs that were bigger than trucks.

The fossils are from about 100 million years ago, during the Cretaceous period. During that time, north Arlington looked more like Galveston or the Mississippi coastline with giant reptiles roaming about, said Derek Main, a UT-Arlington graduate student who is heading the project.

"These animals we are finding can only be found in North Texas," Main said. "They are truly Texas dinosaurs."

Since last year, Main and his students and volunteers from the Dallas Paleontological Society have dug up numerous fossils, including bones of what could be two new dinosaur species and a new crocodile species, he said.

The well-preserved fossil field is located in far north Arlington on 2,000 acres of private, undeveloped land.

Two UT-Arlington students, Phil Kirchhoff and Bill Walker, and local fossil collector Art Sahlstein discovered the fossil site in 2003 and brought the finds to Main, who teaches about dinosaurs.

The discoveries included dinosaur and crocodile teeth and bones of other Archosaurs, which means "ruling reptiles." But it wasn't until 2008, after the private property was bought by Huffines Communities of Dallas, that excavation was allowed to begin. Now the group has until October to complete digging at the site near the Trinity River, which is slated to be developed by Huffines Communities into the Viridian master planned community with homes priced from \$300,000 to more than \$1 million.

On Tuesday, Main highlighted some of the findings at the Arlington Archosaur site at a Geological Society of America conference at the University of Texas at Dallas campus in Richardson.

The group hopes to find the skull that will help confirm whether some of the bones they've uncovered belong to a new species of dinosaur or whether it is a protohadros, a duck-billed dinosaur whose fossils were discovered in Grapevine, Main said.

The group is also trying to determine whether the teeth, claws and other bones they've found belong to a new species of carnivorous dinosaur, which has been dubbed the Arlington T-Rex, as well as a possible new species of giant prehistoric crocodile that had a long, narrow snout.

The group has also found more than 100 pieces of coprolites, which is a fancy name for fossilized poop. Some of it is the size of a football. They are studying the excrement to determine what the prehistoric beasts ate.

All the fossil findings have been taken to UT-Arlington for study. So far, more fossils have been recovered from the Arlington Archosaur Site than from any other site in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, according to the group's Web site.

The Arlington Archosaur site is unique because of its discovery in an urban area. More dinosaur bones and fossils from the Cretaceous period, which is when most dinosaurs lived, could be discovered in the area but have been covered over by concrete and asphalt, Main said.

"We build malls and highways on top of our Cretaceous rocks. We've built a city on top of it," Main said.