DINOSAUR DISCOVERIES IN MONTANA

*T. rex* and *Triceratops* Go to Smithsonian and Museum of the Rockies

- Helicopter Air Lift of Dinosaur Bones on Aug. 24 -

The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and a team of dinosaur experts and preparators from the Museum of the Rockies at Montana State University in Bozeman, Mont., have discovered and excavated new fossil dinosaur specimens in Montana. Two *Tyrannosaurus rex* specimens and a *Triceratops* specimen are among the discoveries at 12 excavation sites near Hell Creek, Mont. A helicopter will airlift these specimens from the remote excavation sites to the team’s base camp on Saturday, Aug. 24 (weather permitting). Media should contact Michele Urie, Smithsonian Institution, at (202) 786-2950 to attend the helicopter air lift.

The expedition was led by Jack Horner, curator of paleontology at the Museum of the Rockies. Horner was also recently named senior scholar in the Department of Paleobiology at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History.

A partial *T. rex* found in Hell Creek and excavated by the Smithsonian team will be donated to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. The *T. rex* was found on U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service land by Nathan Myrvold, who was visiting the Museum of the Rockies team during their field season in 2001. The nickname for this specimen, “N. rex,” honors Mr. Myrvold. A second, more complete *T. rex* found in Hell Creek will go to the Museum of the Rockies.

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“The addition of *T. rex* fossil bones to the Smithsonian is significant,” said Doug Erwin, interim director and curator in the paleobiology department at the Natural History Museum. “The Smithsonian field expedition team has succeeded in their quest to expand the museum’s extensive and important collections for future study and research.”

The Smithsonian’s field team, led by Michael Brett-Surman, Pete Kroehler and Steve Jabo, worked in Hell Creek from June 6 to July 16. The crews endured torrential rain, hail, 70 mph winds, extreme temperature changes and other natural weather challenges throughout their expedition. The team helped identify specimens that were discovered during the summer expedition and prepared plaster jackets around the specimens so they could be transported out of the remote site. Check out the daily web journal kept by the Smithsonian field team at [http://www.nmnh.si.edu/paleo/summer2002_fieldjournal_intro.html](http://www.nmnh.si.edu/paleo/summer2002_fieldjournal_intro.html).

The Department of Paleobiology at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History is one of the leading centers for paleontological research in the world. Paleobiologists at the Museum of Natural History investigate many areas of study, including how long-term physical changes of ancient global geography and climate have affected the evolution of plants and animals, how ecosystems have responded to these changes, and how these responses have affected today’s patterns of biodiversity. Research in the department ranges from the earliest record of life on Earth, at least 3.5 billion years ago, to the present. The world-class collections include 40 million to 50 million fossil plants, animals and geologic specimens. Also included in the collections are more than 1,500 catalogued specimens of dinosaurs.

The National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W., welcomed more than 8.4 million people during the year 2001, making it the most visited natural history museum in the world. Opened in 1910, the museum is dedicated to maintaining and preserving the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. It also fosters critical scientific research as well as educational programs and exhibitions that present the work of its scientists and curators to the public. The museum is part of the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research complex. The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History is open for special summer hours from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day through Sept. 2. Admission is free.

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