

Fossil hunters dig for dinosaur bones in Alberta's badlands



The Alberta badlands' prehistoric past draws dinosaur enthusiasts.

Specimens of dinosaurs from Alberta's badlands can be found in 30 institutions around the world and the search for fossil keys to the dinosaur species and their fate continues in Alberta.

Geologist George Dawson's discovery of a dinosaur bone in Alberta's badlands in 1873 started the search for the prehistoric creatures.

The first fossil hunters were Canadians working for the Geological Survey of Canada. The search mushroomed in 1909 when a rancher from Manitoba's Red Deer River Valley announced during a visit to the American Museum of Natural History in New York that he had found fossil bones on his land.

Barnum Brown, a major collector for the museum, headed west to begin the golden years of dinosaur collecting — from 1910 to 1917. "It was the heyday of collecting," said Richard Fox, who set up the University of Alberta paleontology department in 1965.

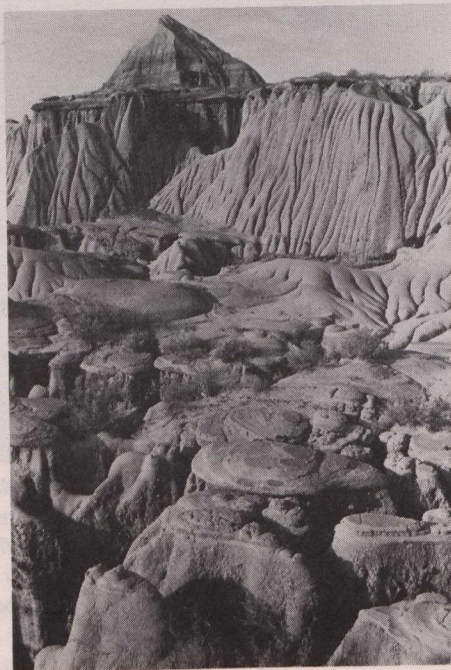
New species were unearthed almost yearly in what is considered the second richest dinosaur bed in the world, next to an inaccessible area in Mongolia.

Fearful that Canadians would be left out, the Geological Survey sought help from C.H. Sternberg who, with his three sons, dominated Canadian dinosaur collecting for a few decades. They unearthed some of the best specimens in collections first owned by the Geological Survey and later by the National Museum of Canada

and the Royal Ontario Museum. Between 1914 and 1928, more than 200 major specimens were excavated in Alberta.

Some rivalry between collectors developed but Loris Russell — the last living collector from the period — said competition was friendly. Russell, 77, has retired from the Royal Ontario Museum but retains his interest in dinosaurs.

Interest in and money for dinosaur hunting waned after the initial flurry of



The badlands, with their unique formations, contain dinosaur fossils.

activity. The First World War, the Depression and the fact that major institutions had as many dinosaurs as they wanted were factors.

The Alberta government finally started thinking about assembling its own collection in the 1960s. The best dinosaur collections are still in Toronto, Ottawa and outside the country, but many people predict the revived dinosaur craze will reverse the situation.

Despite the harvests of the early 1900s there are still restricted areas in Dinosaur Provincial Park where bones are quite numerous.

Six major excavations took place in and around the park last summer and the Alberta government announced last year that it would spend \$27.4 million to build a paleontology museum and research centre in Drumheller.

Chris McGowan, head of vertebrate paleontology at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, estimates that in five to ten years Alberta will have one of the biggest collections and "one of world prominence".

Dave Spalding, interpretive planner for the Paleontological Museum and Research Institute in Edmonton, said ideas being discussed for the Drumheller museum include large-scale walk-through dioramas.

Canada hosts cattle conference

The Canadian Jersey Cattle Club will host the tenth World Jersey Bureau Conference in Edmonton, August 27 to September 2.

Representatives from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, the United States, Denmark, South Africa and India have pre-registered for the conference. Among these is the royal herdsman for the British royal family's large herd of Jersey cattle.

About 300 foreign buyers of Jersey breeding stock are expected to visit Canada during the conference and participate in pre- and post-conference tours. The tours will include visits to Jersey farms and shows in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia to help promote the sale of Canadian breeding stock.

In addition to a \$25 000 grant, Agriculture Canada has donated calves from the National Showcase Herd to help raise funds for the conference and will host a barbecue for the delegates at the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa.