

Dinosaurs invade Gainesville with ‘Cruisin’ the Fossil Freeway’ exhibit Feb. 4

Dec. 22, 2011

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PHOTOS AVAILABLE

GAINESVILLE, Fla. --- Dinosaurs are coming to Gainesville! Take a prehistoric road trip through the Florida Museum of Natural History’s newest temporary exhibit, “Cruisin’ the Fossil Freeway with Artist Ray Troll and Paleontologist Kirk Johnson,” Feb. 4 through Sept. 3.

The exhibit features 30 fossils, including complete skeleton casts of the three-horned Triceratops dinosaur, and Albertosaurus, a carnivore that lived about 70 million years ago. The fossils complement 19 color prints and five large-scale murals by Troll, created for the book “Cruisin’ the Fossil Freeway,” by Troll and Johnson. Visitors also will be able to observe Florida Museum scientists in a functioning paleontology lab preparing fossils collected during research projects from around the world.

“Most of us think ‘dinosaur’ when we think of fossils, and this exhibit does have dinosaurs,” said Darcie MacMahon, Florida Museum assistant director for exhibits. “But it also focuses on how fossils inform us about really important topics such as climate change and evolution. These stories will unfold for the visitor as they enjoy the exhibit’s interesting graphics, real fossil specimens and an actively staffed paleontology prep laboratory.”

Other fossils in the exhibit, from the Florida Museum, the Utah Field House of Natural History, the Pink Palace Museum in Memphis, Tenn., and a private collector, include an Ammonite, a large, extinct marine invertebrate; a dinosaur egg from China; a Diplomystus, an extinct fish that lived in the western U.S. about 56 to 34 million years ago; a bat fossil from the Green River Formation; and petrified wood.

Many of the fossils in the exhibit prep lab are from the Thomas Farm site in Gilchrist County and a National Science Foundation-funded research project in Panama.

Florida Museum exhibit project manager Kurt Auffenberg said he is hopeful the prep lab will give visitors a glimpse of how paleontologists prepare specimens and conduct research.

“Visitors will have the opportunity to see the process of science through discovery,” Auffenberg said. “They can see researchers sifting fine sediment or picking through a big slab of rock in search of a bone or tooth from an animal that lived millions of years ago.”

At specified times, visitors will be able to interact directly with the scientists and ask questions about fossils and the work performed in the lab. Exhibit volunteers will also be available to answer questions while scientists are working.

Admission to “Cruisin’ the Fossil Freeway” is \$5 for adults, \$4.50 for Florida residents, seniors and college students and \$4 for ages 3-17. Value admission tickets to the exhibit and Butterfly Rainforest are also available, \$13 for adults, \$12 for Florida residents, seniors and college students and \$9 for ages 3-17.

“Cruisin’ the Fossil Freeway” was organized by the Burke Museum at the University of Washington. The exhibit is presented locally by the Toomey Foundation for the Natural Sciences, Inc. and the Florida Museum Associates Board.

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The Florida Museum of Natural History inspires people to value the biological richness and cultural heritage of our diverse world and make a positive difference in its future. The museum is located at 3215 Hull Road just east of Southwest 34th in the University of Florida Cultural Plaza in Gainesville. Hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday and from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Butterfly Rainforest admission is \$10.50 for adults (\$9 Fla. residents) and \$6 for ages 3-17. Prices subject to change. For more information, including directions and parking, visit www.flmnh.ufl.edu or call 352-846-2000.