



Dinosaur Bones Saved from Raging Waters

By Roland Gangloff, Curator of Earth Science

For the UA Museum's dinosaur hunters, four weeks of challenging summer fieldwork in 2001 resulted in the mapping and recovery of over 100 bones and teeth from a bone bed first discovered in 1997. The field season began four weeks earlier when UAF graduate student James Sammons was joined by his advisors, Dr. Roland Gangloff of the Museum and Dr. Tony Fiorillo of the Dallas Museum of Natural History, and two volunteers, Dawn Roberts and Linda Casassa. This initial crew separated after two weeks, and three new crewmembers, Leanne Converse, Yiming Wang, and Caitlin Caulfield, joined James Sammons on the bone bed.

The hard work of both these crews added significantly to our ever-expanding knowledge of paleo-Arctic dinosaurs. A new skull and body skeleton of the rare horned dinosaur, *Pachyrhinosaurus*, was discovered, partially excavated and mapped. The discovery of a tooth of a very young duckbill dinosaur added to the summer's important finds. A very different sort of excitement brought the season to a quick and nervous halt.

The Colville River, some 120 miles southwest of Prudhoe Bay, had been rising slowly for several days when the second field crew were greeted, on August 15, by an accelerated drowning of the gravel bar that served as their base camp. The leader, James Sammons, a Masters Candidate in the Department of Geology and Geophysics, radioed pilot Walt Audi of Alaska Flyers and requested an early evacuation. When Walt arrived, he was unable

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to land due to the high water. With the situation worsening, James then called the Barrow Volunteer Search & Rescue.

They were unable to fly their helicopter out.

The following day, snow flurries and colder temperatures made the predicament even more threatening. Although Search & Rescue was still tied up by more serious calls elsewhere, they were able to contact the crew of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter out on a training mission. The Chinook crew from B Company/4-123 Aviation Regiment was under the command of Major Lissa Young. The Chinook arrived in the late afternoon and was able to assist with the transport of equipment and fossils. Major Young, seeing the circumstances first hand, flew on to Deadhorse and was able to communicate

the near desperate conditions to Barrow Search & Rescue who, by then, had a helicopter available.

The Search & Rescue helicopter arrived around 9:00 p.m. to the great relief of the dinosaur hunters. They gladly climbed aboard the chopper, grateful that there were such fine people around, including Major Young's Chinook crew. This was a dramatic ending to another

successful dinosaur field season. The hunters will return next year.



(Above) James Sammons (UAF Graduate Student) with Barrow Volunteer Search & Rescue crewman briefing before liftoff.

(Below) Caitlin Caulfield waits with gear and equipment before pickup.
Yiming Wang Photos



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