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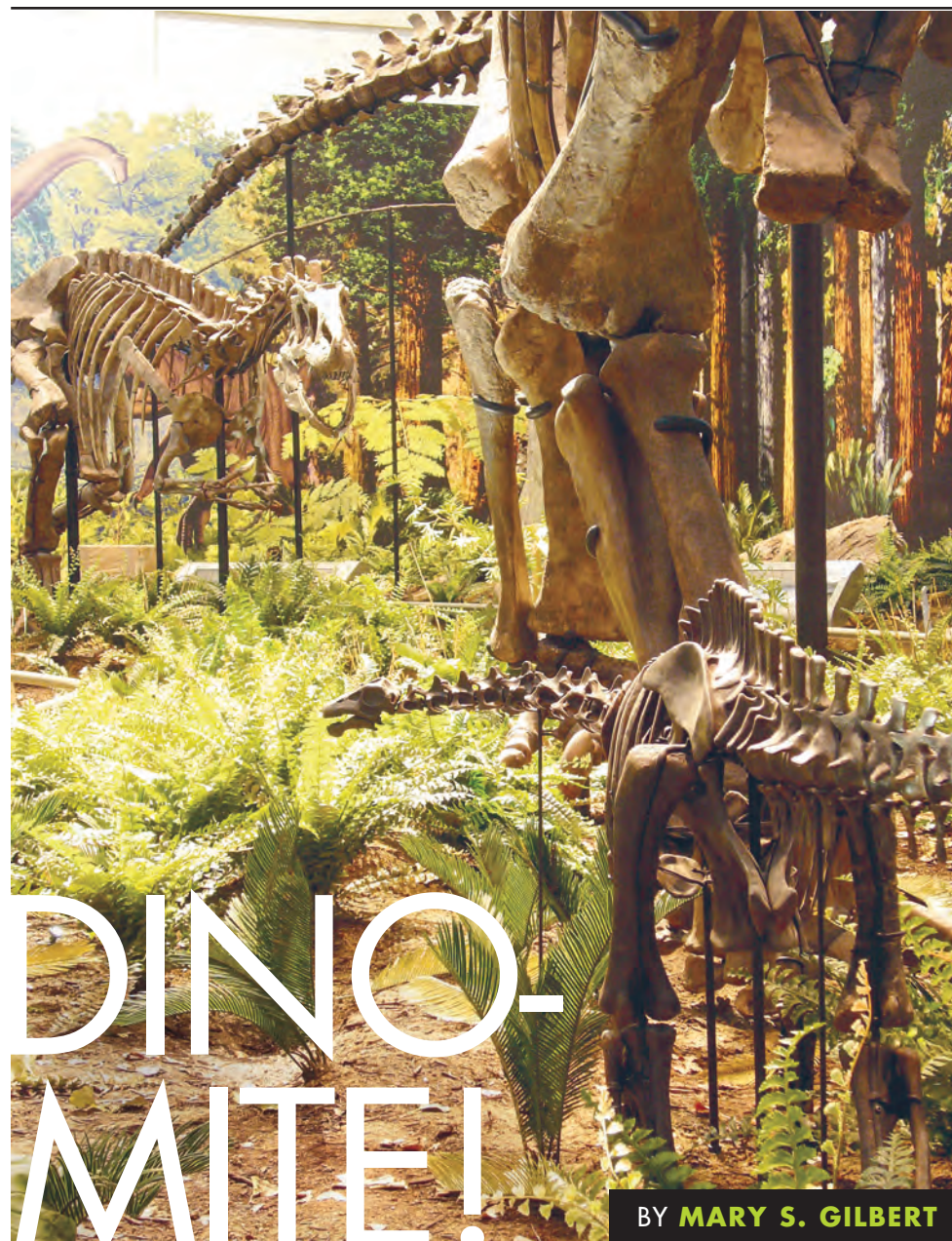
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DINO-  
MITE!

BY MARY S. GILBERT

In the foreground, the world's most complete specimen of a Juvenile Apatosaurus is positioned in relation to what could have been its mother, *Apatosaurus louisai* (named for Andrew Carnegie's wife, Louise). In the background is an Allosaurus.

The scene is life-threatening, fraught with predatory intent and a revved up survival instinct.

A meat-eating Allosaurus is rapidly approaching a baby Apatosaurus, intent on making the unwitting baby its next meal. The protective mother prepares to defend her endangered child with a quick and decisive whip of her long, curved tail to halt the charging beast.

Who's fast enough to get away? Who's eaten? Who lives to pass on its DNA?

These were the realities of daily living that dinosaurs faced during their tenure as long as 250 million years ago, and they prompt the questions and subsequent discussions that the Carnegie Museum of Natural History hopes to initiate with its new exhibition *Dinosaurs in Their Time*. At 18,600 square feet, this expansive and updated exhibit is more than three times the size of the former Dinosaur Hall, which opened in 1907.

The \$36 million renovation project is the largest at the museum since its founding in 1895. *Dinosaurs in Their Time* showcases dinosaurs as living animals that interacted among other animals and plants that shared their world. The exhibit contains 19

mounted dinosaur skeletons (four more than Dinosaur Hall), and some 230 fossils of vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants—together one of the largest, most diverse and scientifically important collections in the world.

The dinosaurs are grouped chronologically according to their time periods—Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous—and then further divided into their respective land and sea environments.

"We want *Dinosaurs in Their Time* to be a first-day attraction for visitors to Pittsburgh," says Ellen James, manager of public relations and communications for the museum. "We want visitors to experience it as the closest thing they can get to stepping back in time to feel what it was like living with dinosaurs. The world of dinosaurs was vast, and that world was teeming with life, including amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Dinosaurs were active, vital animals. They didn't live all together at the same time and within the same environment. They were incredibly successfully evolutionarily speaking, because they were here for hundreds of million of years.

"Our exhibit is the only one that has recreated the life of dinosaurs with such detail," James continues. "Every plant, tree, and mammal displayed alongside the dinosaurs lived with them in their time. Even the dirt is representative."

Realizing that the dinosaurs in Dinosaur Hall were showing their age—so to speak—the museum decided in 2005 that it was time for a truly extreme makeover. Over the years, the skeletons had received annual coats of shellac and brown paint for preservation and protection, and the accumulation of layers had dulled their aesthetics. All of that was stripped away in the overhaul, which included dismantling, cleaning, restoring, and remounting, to reveal the real fossil bone.

Further, when the dinosaurs had first been installed in the Carnegie at the turn of the 20th century, the prevailing theory espoused by many paleontologists was that dinosaurs were lumbering, tail-dragging, cold-blooded oddities that walked upright. The Carnegie mounted and exhibited its collection guided by that school of thought.

Since then, however, new scientific theories regarding their posture, locomotion, and biomechanics had been developed, leaving the Carnegie's specimens looking exceedingly dated. The revised hypothesis was that dinosaurs were far from being evolutionary throwbacks. Indeed,

The Carnegie  
Museum of  
History is ready  
to unveil its  
new \$36-million  
dollar  
dinosaur exhibit

scientists postulated that dinosaurs walked with their backs parallel to the ground, held their tails aloft, and that some even worked together in packs and could sprint short distances. During the remounting process, the dinosaurs were re-posed to reflect the most current research and computer modeling.

Accompanying the exhibits are educational panels and interactive

touch screens housing extensive information that further explains dinosaurs' appearance, behavior, environment, geographic distribution, and evolutionary relationships. They also contain videos of Carnegie staff discussing field research and discoveries.

The Carnegie owes its renowned stature as the world's third largest repository of dinosaur fossils, following the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and the American Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., to its namesake, industrialist Andrew Carnegie. His own fascination with dinosaurs inspired him to finance a number of fossil digs in several western states, thus netting nearly one million pounds of fossils to establish the foundation of the collection.

The uncovering in 1899 of a colossal, 84-foot-long creature—named *Diplodocus carnegii* in honor of Andrew Carnegie and today affectionately known as Dippy—necessitated the building of a new museum to properly display the massive skeleton.

The opening of *Dinosaurs in Their Time* is occurring in two phases. Phase One, opening to the general public on November 21, highlights the Triassic and Jurassic periods and the Cretaceous Seaway. Phase Two, scheduled to open in spring 2008, will unveil the remainder of the Cretaceous Period and will feature the staging of two fierce Tyrannosaurus rexes positioned as if fighting—a sight sure to provide the unparalleled WOW factor within an already stellar assemblage. SA

*The Carnegie Museum of Natural History is located at 4400 Forbes Avenue in Oakland. Hours are generally Tuesday-Saturday, 10 to 5; Thursday evening until 8; and Sunday, 10 to 5. However, there are extended hours during holiday weekends. The museum will be closed November 20, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. Effective November 21, admission is: Adults-\$15, Seniors-\$12, Students/Children-\$11, Members and children under 3-Free.*



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