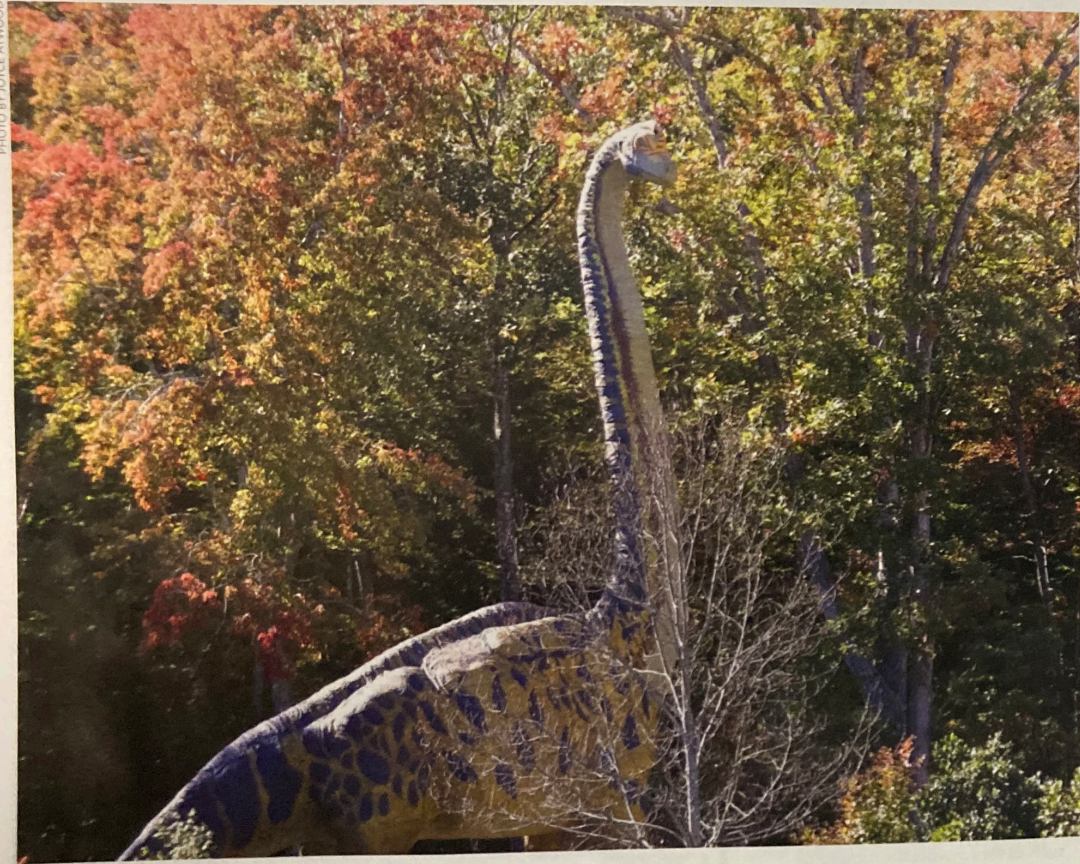
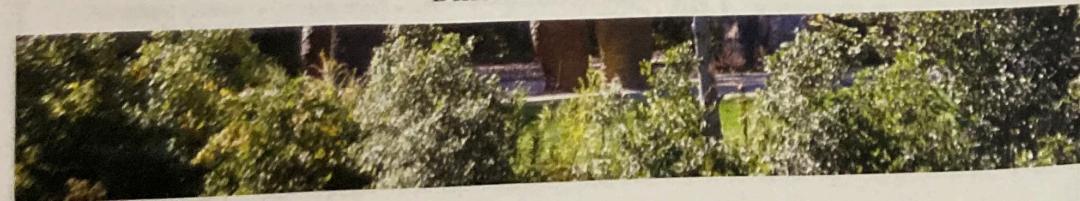


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Dinosaur FOOTPRINTS IN CT



Uncovering prehistoric CT

WHO ROAMED THE AREA BEFORE HUMANS?



Many of the dinosaur tracks at the Park were made by a dinosaur like the Dilophosaurus. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR STATE PARK

WRITTEN BY MORGAN RIZZO

During the early Jurassic period, Connecticut was located 15 degrees north of the equator in the supercontinent Pangea. When the separation of the continents began, it allowed for the continental crust to break and sink, creating a depression called a rift valley. This erosion created an ideal condition consisting of mud and soft sand buried with more sediments on top which preserved the tracks of the dinosaurs into stone.

This formation of the Connecticut River Valley around 220 years ago currently stretches 20 miles

long from New Haven to Deerfield, Massachusetts. Buried in the sandstone rock are track impressions of dinosaurs from the early Jurassic period.

On August 23, 1966, when bulldozer operator, Edward McCarthy was extracting land for a work project in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, he discovered a three-toed track in the sandstone. After removing more land, over 2,000 tracks were found leading to the establishment of a park where visitors can learn about prehistoric dinosaurs.

The Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill, Connecticut was built around the original fossil site and is a registered natural landmark. The exhibit center



TOP Visitors of the Dinosaur Place have the opportunity to ride the pedal karts at Lapilli Landing. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR PLACE
ABOVE Bearing its sharp teeth, the Allosaurus is one of the many dinosaurs you can see at the Dinosaur Place. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR PLACE
BELOW Dinosaur State Park is one of the only locations where you can make a plaster cast of a real dinosaur track to take home. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR STATE PARK



is home to 750 tracks with evidence of at least four different dinosaurs in Connecticut. The footprints reveal details of life in the early Jurassic period allowing both scientists and visitors to travel back in time.

"Most of the tracks discovered in 1966... are all Eubrontes," says Michael Ross, Environmental Coordinator and Park Supervisor. "They are three-toed theropod tracks that are 15 inches long made by a dinosaur like the Dilophosaurus."

The Dilophosaurus was about five feet tall at the hip and had two large crests on the top of its head, suggesting its name "two-crested lizard". The meat-eating dinosaur was a top predator that moved quickly.

However, the theropods were not the only dinosaurs that roamed the Connecticut Valley. Ancestors of long neck dinosaurs, the Anchisaurus and a four-foot-tall carnivore called Coelophysis inhabited the area that now preserve their once hidden tracks.

"Through some tracks and fossils, there is evidence for some other animals that are ancient reptiles that aren't even dinosaurs," says Ross. "We have evidence for a few of those and mammals too."

Along with dinosaur and mammal fossils, the Dinosaur State Park has over two and a half miles of nature trails that do not contain tracks, but have habitats like a shrub swamp and a traprock ridge revealing what was once melting hot lava. The arboretum surrounding the exhibit center is home to over 250 plants representing species that lived during the time of the dinosaurs. Inside the encapsulated dome, visitors can view bone structure exhibits and learn about the layers of Earth and moving plates in geology exhibits. For young children wanting to play with small plastic dinosaur figurines, there are hands-on activities in the discovery room. Eager, future scientists can observe live animals to recognize similarities between modern and ancient creatures, all while taking in movies that play during the day. Families can bring their own casting supplies and choose a track to cast. With the help of a staff member, they can mix the plaster and make the cast to take home a dinosaur footprint.

The Dinosaur Park is located at 400 West Street in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. The grounds are open from 9:30 to 4:30 p.m. and the trails close at 4 p.m. The Exhibit Center is open Tuesday to Sunday from 9 to 4:30 p.m. Due to renovations, the Exhibit Center will be closed March 1,

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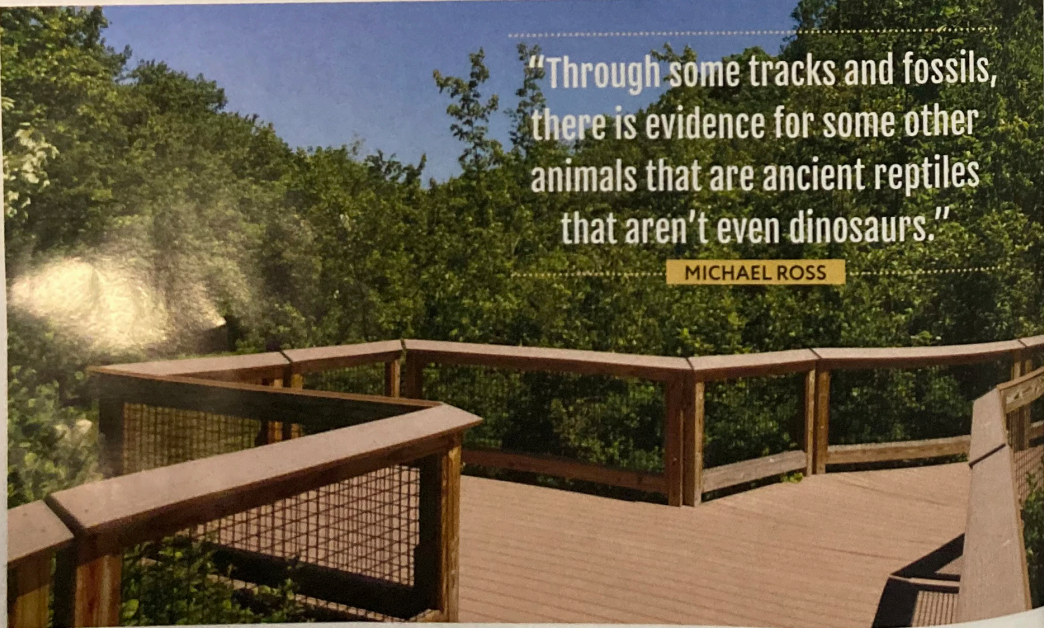


ABOVE At the Dinosaur Place, visitors can see replicas of more than 50 life-sized dinosaurs like the Suchomimus along the nature trails. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR PLACE

BELOW The Dinosaur State Park has 60 acres and 2.5 miles of nature trails. The Red trail includes this 300 foot boardwalk over a red maple swamp. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR STATE PARK

"Through some tracks and fossils, there is evidence for some other animals that are ancient reptiles that aren't even dinosaurs."

MICHAEL ROSS



2022 but plans to reopen in August 2022. The Park will remain open.

If you are looking to visit a dinosaur park sooner than August, you can make a trip to the Dinosaur Place in Montville, Connecticut. The park was opened in 2003 by a local family looking to create an interactive educational playground for children to learn about the prehistoric past along with curating collections of minerals and fossils.

"The park has grown from having a single life-sized dinosaur in our parking lot to over fifty dinosaurs throughout the 60-acre trail," says Anastasia Lange, Marketing Director of Nature's Art Village. "The Dinosaur Place in Nature's Art Village strives to provide an excellent environment for educational fun."

Families can immerse themselves in the Jurassic era by viewing the dinosaurs along the trail while spotting an erupting volcano. Along the path, visitors will encounter an interactive animatronic Dilophosaurus and caves to explore. Touch and learn activities scattered among the trails allow for comparison of the shapes and textures of dinosaur teeth, fossils, and other natural objects.

"A majority of The Dinosaur Place's life-sized dinosaurs are a broad representation of dinosaurs found around the world," says Lange. "We are not limited to just Connecticut-based dinosaurs, although our Ancient Fossil Shop has impressive displays of fossils that were found in Connecticut, including real Jurassic-era footprints."

On hot days, children can be sprayed by dinosaur water cannons and get drenched from dumping buckets in New England's largest Splash Pad. They can get lost in the A-MAZE-asaurus and jump and balance their way through Monty's Playground, a play system with a 3-D design allowing for multiple ways to climb. From roaring dinosaurs to trembling pathways leading to a volcano, The Dinosaur Place creates an interactive experience for all ages.

The Dinosaur Place is located at 1650 Hartford-New London Turnpike in Montville, Connecticut. It is opening this year on April 1st with new additions of a train, expansion of the Splash Pad, and new pedal kart tracks. **D**



ABOVE Two young boys look up at the 40-foot tall Brachiosaurus dinosaur, large enough to drive a car under. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR PLACE

BELOW The Dinosaur Place's Splash Pad is New England's largest zero-depth water park. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR PLACE

BOTTOM Along the 1.5 mile nature trail, take a photo with the Carnotaurus and visit the touch-and-learn activities scattered throughout. PHOTO COURTESY OF DINOSAUR PLACE

