

as seen in



Derek Main

Fossil Hunter and Dinosaur Digger at Arlington Archosaur Site

When people think of paleontologists, it's usually the movie Jurassic Park that comes to mind first. What is it really like to be a paleontologist? Paleontology is a lot of work, and very exciting, but there is a lot less running and screaming as seen in the movies! Seriously though, it is a very rewarding feeling to be a part of a project like the Arlington Archosaur Site. To find so many fossils from so many animals that help tell the story of ancient Texas is very cool!

You were the first to use Ground Penetrating Radar as a way to find dinosaur bones. Where did the idea come from?

It really began for me when a classmate and I were walking down the hall at the University of Texas at Dallas, back in my undergrad days. He was telling me about a project he was working on that utilized ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to find human remains for FBI missing persons' cases. He told me how well it was working on mapping the locations of remains. At the time I was helping with two sauropod (long neck dinosaurs) excavations, and thought that if GPR could find little human bones, why not big dinosaur bones. So we gave it a try, and it worked.

Fossils of ancient dinosaurs, croco-

diles, turtles, fish, plants and trees have all been uncovered at the site. Did you ever expect to find such a wealth of fossils? No. This project has been a consistent surprise to me from day one. When the discoverers first approached me with the report of the site, I honestly didn't believe them. It just sounded too incredible for the DFW area. What they

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What does this project mean to you personally? The Arlington Archosaur Site has been a personal voyage of discovery for me. I'm not just talking about fossils either. The people I've met and grown to love like family are a big part of this project. Aside from being surprised by all the cool fossils, I'm constantly surprised by both the dedication of my all-volunteer crew and the amazing camaraderie that we have.
The first fossils were discovered in

2003. However, excavation didn't begin until 2008, when the University of Texas at Arlington was granted access to the land. How did it feel having to wait nearly five years? It was frustrating as hell. I more or less gave up on it and put it out of my mind for several years. It was one of the site's discoverers, Phil Kirchhoff, who was persistent enough to stick to his guns and find the new landowner, contact them and set up a meeting. But once contact was made, all the puzzle pieces came into place.

Huffines Communities of Dallas, the owner of the land that Arlington Archosaur Site sits on, has allowed excavation

to continue until the end of May 2010. Do you feel pressure mounting to finish the job? Huffines has been absolutely fantastic in allowing us to explore and excavate on their property. The Arlington Archosaur Site Project could not have happened without their support. Do I think we will find every fossil? I doubt it. There is just too much out there. But we will do our best to find all that we can as quickly as we can. If by chance we were given more time, though, we certainly would not turn it down. It's a great area to explore and make discoveries! **fw**

