

# DIGGING FOR DINOS

TEXAS CUB SCOUTS HIT THE DIRT AND COME UP WITH SOME COOL STUFF.



*A vision of the past: Guys from Pack 333, Hurst, Tex., imagine what the Arlington Archosaur Site might have looked like about 95 million years ago.*

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**T**he Cub Scouts of Pack 333, Hurst, Tex., are lucky to live where they do. Their homes are only a few miles from a prehistoric graveyard. Well, it's not exactly a graveyard, but it's a place where lots and lots of fossils have been discovered.



## ANCIENT ANIMALS

"I study dinosaurs a lot, but I've only dug for dinosaurs before online with Dino Dig 2.0," Nicholas Hurbough, 10, says. "When I found out about what we were doing today, I almost fainted."

Luckily, nobody faints, though everybody is really excited.

"I feel very special because

most people don't get to do something like this," says Paul Rizzo, 9.

Before the guys can dig in, they are given a tour of the Arlington Archosaur Site by Derek Main, a paleontologist (a scientist who studies prehistoric life). He explains that they are standing on what was once an ancient coastline. That's why fossils of both land and sea animals have been found here. Among the land animals is a newly discovered species of dinosaur, the duck-billed hadrosaur.

All this dinosaur talk while touring the area has Matthew McNatt, 9, a little on edge.

"I'm nervous about velociraptors walking in the tall grass," he says.

Since scientists say those mean little dudes haven't been around for about 80 million years (and lived in what is now Asia), there are no worries, Matthew.

## DIGGING IN

After a safety talk and some instruction on how to do the digging, the guys are let loose with gardening tools and brushes to hunt for fossils.

This is exciting stuff. Besides the new dinosaur species that has been discovered here, scientists and volunteers are working on fossils of one whose skull hasn't been found yet. Without a skull, they can't tell what kind of dinosaur it is. It just might be another new species.

The guys want to find that skull.

"I want to find a T. rex skull," Andy Lange, 9, says.

After working a while, Nicholas gets excited over a discovery he has made, but his hopes are soon dashed.

"I thought I had part of a head," he says, "but I found out it was just a rock."

## DUTIFUL DISCOVERY

Turns out, the guys don't find that skull. But they do uncover something else: ancient crocodile poop.

"Coprolites" are fossilized poop from prehistoric animals, and the site is full of coprolites from dinosaurs, crocodiles and sharks. The lucky crew that makes this discovery includes

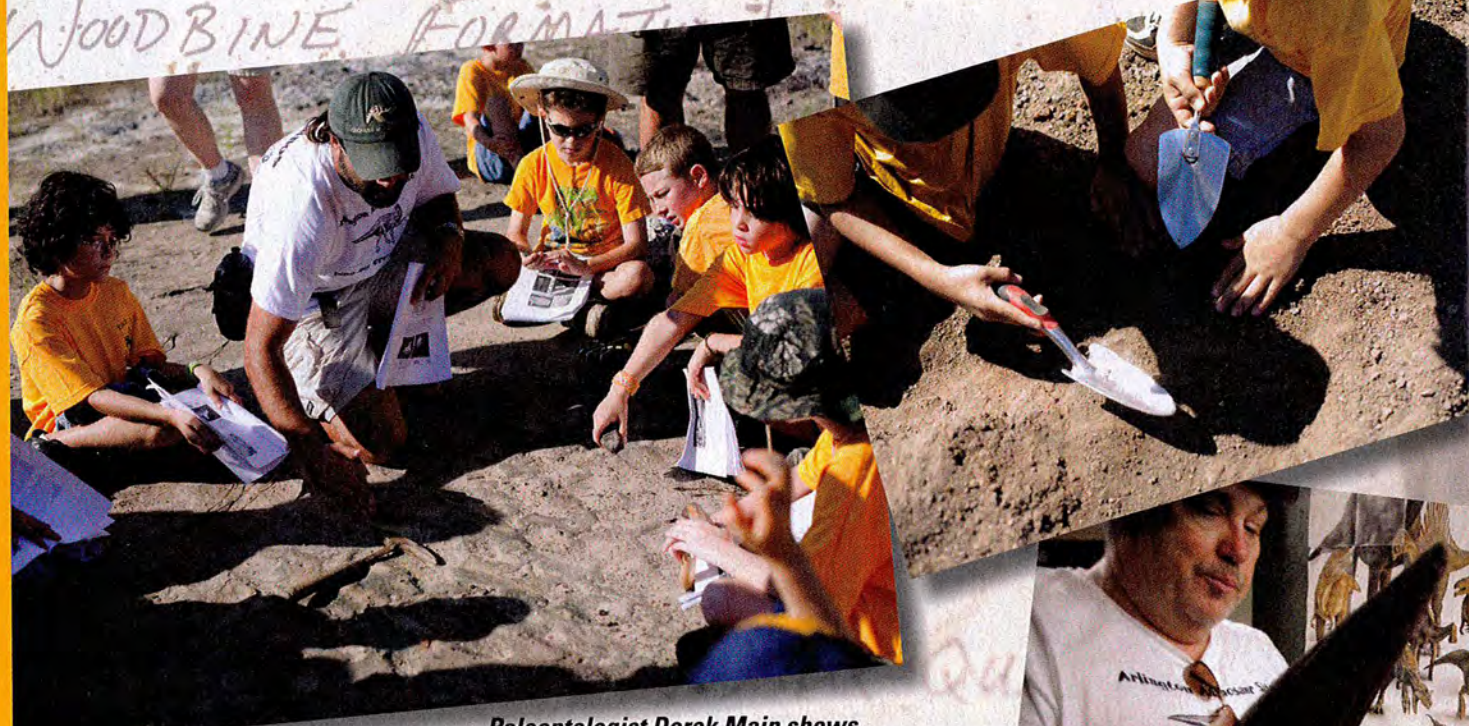
Christopher Dickerson, Joseph Dyer and Carsen Smith, all 8.

"It was cool," Christopher says. "The coprolite is kind of white and brown and about three inches long."

After this discovery, the pack heads to the paleolab at nearby University of Texas at Arlington, where fossils from the site are cleaned and stored. While here, Webelos Scouts work on earning their Geologist badge and Cub Scouts on their Geology belt loop.

They learn that a lot of work goes into cleaning the fossils. Using dental picks and other tools, workers took 200 hours to clean just one hadrosaur vertebra (back bone).

As the guys wrap up their dino adventure, Christopher is still excited about the day: "I'm really glad I joined the pack so I can do all this cool stuff." ♣

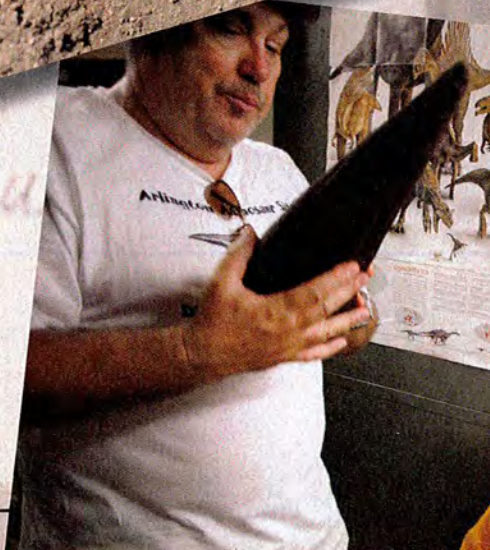


Paleontologist Derek Main shows the guys ripple marks in the rock bed, proof that there was shallow water across this area long, long ago.

Instructor Phil Kirchhoff (one of the founders of the dig site) shows off a big find to Nick Silvas (left) and Kory McElvain.



Left: Paul Rizzo (right) and Kory McElvain are on the hunt. Below: Fossils from the site are kept at the Scotese Museum of Paleontology at the University of Texas at Arlington.



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