

May 17, 2018

Aguttes
164 bis avenue Charles de Gaulle
92200 Neuilly sur Seine
Paris
France

Dear Monsieur Aguttes,

We are writing to you in our capacity as members of the Executive Committee of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP: <http://vertpaleo.org/>), to express our concern about your forthcoming auction on Monday 4th June of a carnivorous dinosaur skeleton:-
<http://fr.zone-secure.net/39782/791293/#page=57>

The SVP is a non-profit scientific organisation with more than 2200 members that represents vertebrate palaeontologists on an international scale. The Society's remit is to advance the science of vertebrate palaeontology around the world. Your forthcoming auction of a large carnivorous dinosaur skeleton that is claimed to be new to science has raised substantial concern in the international palaeontological community.

We urge you to reconsider and cancel the sale of this scientifically important skeleton. We understand that the fossil was collected legally in the United States with associated details on the provenance of the specimen and geographical location and that it was exported legally to France. Our concern however, as members of the Executive Committee of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, is that scientifically important vertebrate fossils are part of our collective natural heritage and deserve to be held in public trust. Scientific practice demands that conclusions drawn from the fossils should be verifiable: scientists must be able to reexamine, re-measure, and reinterpret them (such reexamination can happen decades or even centuries after their discovery). Fossil specimens that are sold into private hands are lost to science. Even if made accessible to scientists, information contained within privately owned specimens cannot be included in the scientific literature because the availability of the fossil material to other scientists cannot be guaranteed, and therefore verification of scientific claims (the essence of scientific progress) cannot be performed. For these reasons, our Society's bylaws explicitly state that "*The barter, sale, or purchase of scientifically significant vertebrate fossils is not condoned, unless it brings them into, or keeps them within, a public trust.*"

We are also concerned about the assertion made in some media outlets that the new owner has the right to name the specimen if it turns out to be a new taxon. This assertion is misleading because the naming of new species is governed by the rules of the International Code of Nomenclature, which award priority to the first validly published name, not to the owner of the

specimen that formed the basis of the name. Furthermore, professional ethics among paleontological scientists dictate that only if the specimen is housed in a recognised repository with an agreement to curate and maintain fossil specimens in perpetuity is it appropriate to use it to establish a new name. The scientific community considers it unethical to study, name or include in the scientific literature fossil specimens that are privately owned, even if displayed in a public repository.

You will therefore understand our position when we strongly urge you to reconsider and cancel the sale of this important specimen.

We are happy to provide further information pertaining to this matter should you so wish.

Sincerely yours,



P. David Polly, Ph.D.
SVP President
svp_president@vertpaleo.org



Emily J. Rayfield, Ph.D.
SVP Vice President



John A. Long, Ph.D.
Past SVP President