



Society of Vertebrate Paleontology

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FEIN: 06-0906643

Society of Vertebrate Paleontology Urges Preservation of Scientifically Significant Fossils in Public Trust Ahead of *T. rex* Auction

July 13, 2026

The Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP) recognizes the public excitement surrounding the upcoming auction of "Gus," an exceptionally complete *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton. While spectacular dinosaur fossils capture the imaginations of people around the world, SVP emphasizes that specimens of this scientific importance represent far more than rare collectibles.

SVP's longstanding position is that scientifically significant vertebrate fossils should be permanently curated in accredited museums, universities, and other public research institutions where they remain available for scientific investigation, education, and public exhibition. These institutions ensure that specimens are preserved, documented, and accessible for future generations.

Scientifically significant vertebrate fossils are unique records of Earth's history. They preserve evidence of ancient biodiversity, evolution, growth, disease, behavior, and the environments in which extinct animals lived.

"The discovery of an important fossil is only the beginning of its scientific story," said Kristina Curry Rogers, Vice President of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology. "Many of the most significant advances in paleontology have come years or even decades after a fossil was collected, as new analytical methods and technologies allowed scientists to ask entirely new questions of specimens already housed in museum collections."

Modern research techniques, including high-resolution CT imaging, geochemical analyses, and molecular investigations are still revealing new information from fossils collected more than a century ago. Because these historic specimens have remained in public collections, researchers have been able to revisit them repeatedly as scientific methods have evolved. The same opportunity should remain available for scientifically important fossils discovered today.

SVP also recognizes the important role that private landowners, amateur fossil enthusiasts, and commercial excavators have played in discovering remarkable specimens. Their contributions have greatly expanded our understanding of prehistoric life. However, preserving a fossil's long-term scientific value requires careful documentation, professional curation, and continued accessibility after discovery and excavation.

As the commercial market for exceptional dinosaur fossils continues to grow, museums and universities face increasing challenges acquiring specimens of the greatest scientific importance. When these fossils enter private ownership without provisions for long-term access, opportunities for future research, education, and public engagement may be permanently diminished.

The Society of Vertebrate Paleontology encourages fossil finders, auction houses, and prospective buyers to work with accredited public institutions to ensure that scientifically significant fossils remain permanently available for scientific study and for the benefit of everyone.

Founded in 1940, the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology is an international scientific organization dedicated to advancing the study of fossil vertebrates through research, education, conservation, and responsible stewardship of the vertebrate fossil record.