

Camarasaurus Dinosaur Dig Continued....with a brief detour.

This year I vowed to travel to Delta Utah, in Millard County Utah. It has long been a dream of mine to visit one of the best Trilobite sites in the world. This year I did it. The place I dug was actually a commercial quarry operated by U-Dig-Fossils. They have been seen on TV on an episode of ...Treasures.

It was quite a drive to get there. Delta is already in a pretty remote area of Millard County, but the quarry near Marjum Pass was way-way out there. I was traveling alone and after about 15 miles along a dirt road out in the middle of no-where I began to question my sanity for going out there.

But it was worth it. When I got there, I met one of the operators, paid a small dig fee and went out to the site. Immediately I found a nice *ELRATHA kingii* trilobite, one of the most common trilobites in the world seen in nearly every rock shop in the country. Within a few minutes of digging I had collected several *ASAPHISCUS wheeleri* a really nice bug that isn't that rare but a great find. In total for only 45 minutes of digging I found....Trilobites. I got enough to suit me. I could have stayed longer but I was in a hurry to go dig my Camarasaurus.



An Overview of the U-Dig-Fossils site



Formation where trilobites are found in countless numbers

This year in the deserts of Utah was wonderful. To recap from last years dig, the first 2 days were was outs literally. We were unable to get into the dig site because the road was washed out. Nevertheless , the desert was very dry. We saw no birds, no mammals, not much but dry grasses cactus and a few lizards.



This big hole is all that remains of the location where we found a tibia, fibula, pubis, sacrum several vertebra, several ribs, a femur, a humerus, two scapula and a corocoid. On the left is the capped rib from last year.

We did get more rib bones out of the ground and we did expose a sacrum, part of the hip structure. Again to reiterate, it is a group effort we have diggers from all over the country coming at different times. It is a huge effort. After I left, the original tibia, fibula and some of the hip bones were pedestaled with the others we found nearby. The block of bones weighed about 2 tons by the time it was plastered. Thanks to the mayor of Hanksville, he brought out some heavy equipment and a flat bed and the entire block was lifted rolled and placed on the flatbed. Other bones had already been removed which were, one of the Femurs, the Humerus, both Scapula and the Corocoid.

There were several bones left in place for the crews coming out this year.

2010 Camarasaurus Dig

The spring was pretty nice. Sufficient rain fell before we arrived that the desert was actually alive with color. There were flowers all over the desert. It was green, yellow and purple instead of brown as it was in years past. Please forgive all of the pictures, but the flora was spectacular. So many different plants out there that I had never seen before. I stopped so many times to take pictures I thought that I would fill the data disk before I even got to the site. This was in stark contrast to the area in Millard County or even here in Hanksville last year.



The creatures were also out in force. In years past it was so dry that birds didn't even fly overhead. This time we saw and heard birds. Saw many lizards and even a rattle snake. A ground squirrel was also out watching us most of the week.



Ok..Ok about the dinosaur.

Last year at the end of the dig season in Utah, the crew had left a few bones partially exposed. A rib was partially jacketed or capped so we could continue the excavation this year. When I arrived I started clearing the site and noticed a few weathered bones in the same general area. They were smaller and seemed to have been weathered just before they were buried about 150 Million years ago. They were quite small. One seemed to be a limb bone about 4 inches long and the other two seemed to be small vertebra. Scott the dig team leader seemed to think they were from a crocodillan.

In any case they had to be removed first before we could continue. So I exposed as much as I could – did the pedestal thing, jacketed and removed them the second day. The Third day I began work on he Camarasaurus rib left from last year. This one was in hard rock sandstone and it took most of the day to try to expose it. As I was digging the trench in preparation to jacket the bone I discovered another bone underneath it. It did not look right. Because the top bone – the rib was jacketed it seemed that the rib was essentially complete. The cap was loose so I picked it off to look and see what was there and to my astonishment, half of the rib was actually secure in the jacket. The other half was still in sandstone – partially exposed. But the surprising thing was that there was part of another rib under the first. As I followed it down, I saw that it became the bone that I found under the first rib in the sandstone. So I began to dig that one out.



Original jacked rib section from last year and the exposed rib, near the tip of the brush is the beginning of the second rib.

In the meantime, Katie from the Burpee began to map and document the discovery so I began to sweep and shovel away dirt from the area. John who had accompanied me to Utah to do a video about the dig also helped along with Alan from Mississippi. As we swept and shoveled and brushed away the dirt we exposed the underlying sandstone. We worked a while – until we were tired and then went back to breaking rock. I worked on the ribs and Jon started taking down part of the sandstone hill. As he did so, Scott came buy and said – what is that ?? John had uncovered two cervical ribs. Some of the ribs closest to the neck. So he started trenching and preparing those to be removed. After John left, he headed back to Michigan I took over the rib work because we still had to map the other two ribs. As I did I discovered a small piece of bone under the other ribs. It was the beginning of the first cervical rib. So I pedestaled that one in preparation for removal.

We still hadn't mapped any of the ribs, the one I started, the two John discovered and then the next one. So as I waited for the survey and mapping crew, I went back to an area near the first where I saw bone weathering out of the side of the hill. As I began to expose it, thinking it was a piece of vertebra, it got bigger and bigger until I had exposed the end of a huge bone. It was the distal end of the Femur. We had only found one so this was the second – now we have both femurs of the Camarasaurus. I worked on it till we left for the evening. The last day, I needed to leave a little early so I actually did go out very early Friday morning to keep working on it, exposing as much as I could before I left.



Circled on the bottom center Rib from last year, up and to the left center the beginning of the new Femur and to the top center the two blocks of cervical ribs.

Bob and Nancy Moore from Houston will come in Sunday and they will take over where I left off. I hope the ribs will be gone by then, Katie planned to remove the ribs and that will allow the new crew easy access to the Femur and all the other bones that are left in the ground.

I'll need to keep close tabs on the diggers this year to see if there might be any more material in the area. They'll have to begin taking down some of the surrounding sediment and who knows, maybe they'll uncover more of my Camarasaurus for me to keep digging on next year.