

NORTH DAKOTA FOSSILS EXHIBITED AT THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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In 1986, the NDGS and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) signed an agreement to cooperatively manage paleontological resources on lands administered by Custer National Forest in North Dakota. Custer National Forest has the responsibility to manage fossils on large tracts of public land in the Little Missouri National Grassland area of western North Dakota. As a result of this agreement, several hundred fossil sites in the Little Missouri National Grassland have been discovered, many of which have been determined to be significant scientific and educational sites. Two fossil exhibits have been established at the North Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck as a result of the NDGS - Forest Service partnership. One of the exhibits is a restored skull of a *Triceratops* dinosaur found in the Cretaceous Hell Creek Formation north of Marmarth, Slope County. The other display is a nearly complete, restored skeleton of a champsosaur, a crocodile-like animal that lived in ponds in western North Dakota during the Paleocene. It was recovered from the Sentinel Butte Formation at the Tracy Mountain fossil site near Belfield, Billings County. The USFS administers the Tracy Mountain fossil site and provided funds for the exhibits.

A second exceptionally well preserved skeleton of a champsosaur was collected at the Tracy Mountain site in 1993. The Forest Service decided that an exhibit of North Dakota fossils at their headquarters in Washington, D.C. would demonstrate their commitment to effective management of fossil resources on lands administered by them. Johnathan Campbell, the NDGS's fossil preparator, restored the champsosaur skeleton and other fossils for the exhibit. The Forest Service believes that this exhibit will help bring attention to the need for effective management strategies of fossils on public lands administered by federal land managing agencies. To help accomplish that goal, the USFS will soon be hiring a paleontologist to develop fossil resource management policy for USFS lands in this country.

Johnathan Campbell and I installed the exhibit with the help of Barbara Beaseley, USGS paleontologist from Chadron, Nebraska, and Carol McCoy Brown, Custer National Forest geologist from Billings, Montana, on January 27 and 28. A dedication ceremony was held on January 29. Mike Dombeck, USFS Chief, Larry Gadt, USFS Director for Mineral and Geology Management, Larry Dawson, USFS District Ranger, Little Missouri National Grassland, and I gave short presentations expressing the need for effective fossil resource management on federal and state administered public lands in this country and the importance of cooperative fossil resource management programs such as the one between the NDGS and the USFS-Custer National Forest.



Champsosaur exhibit at the U.S. Forest Service headquarters. Pictured left to right: Johnathan Campbell, John Hoganson, Barbara Beaseley, and Ken Johnson, USFS Assistant Director for Geology & Mineral Management.