

Triceratops horridus

Common Name:
Three horned dinosaur

Classification:
Class: Reptilia
Order: Ornithischia
Family: Ceratopsidae



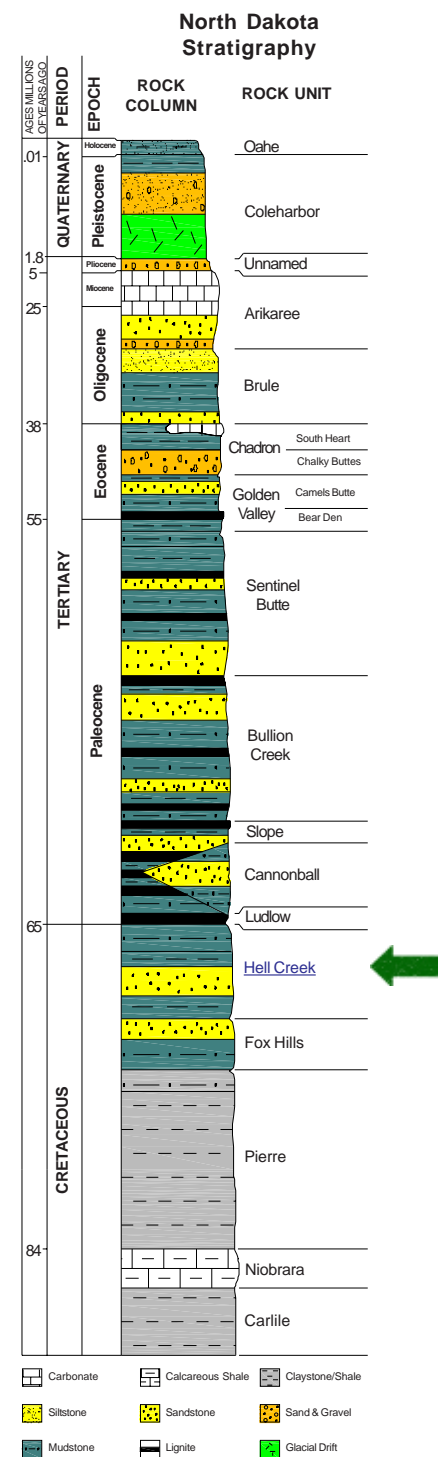
Triceratops horridus skull on display in the North Dakota Industrial Commission office building in Bismarck. Skull was collected in Slope County from U. S. Forest Service-Dakota Prairie Grasslands administered land. Skull is 1.5 m long. North Dakota State Fossil Collection ND 92-19.1.

Description:

Triceratops (three-horned face) was one of the largest and heaviest of the plant eating, horned dinosaurs. This dinosaur grew to lengths of 30 feet and could weigh as much as 5 tons. Even though the front legs of *Triceratops* were short, they were powerfully built to support the weight of its extremely heavy head. The skull of *Triceratops*, often at least 6 feet long in adult specimens, is distinctive because it is equipped with two long brow horns, one short nose horn, and a large, solid, bone frill that covered its neck. It had powerful jaws that ended in a parrot-like peak. These jaws contained batteries of small teeth adapted for shearing fibrous plants. Damage to many *Triceratops* skulls suggests that these animals probably sparred with one another by locking horns and shoving and twisting, possibly to win mates or establish territory. It is possible that *Triceratops* may have charged predators, such as its contemporary *Tyrannosaurus rex*, similar to an enraged rhinoceros. This species of dinosaurs was one of the last to ever live.



Triceratops in a bald cypress forest. Painting by Elaenor Kish, courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada.



Locations where fossils have been found