

Mesohippus bairdi

Common Name:
Three-toed horse

Classification:
Class: Mammalia
Order: Perissodactyla
Family: Equidae



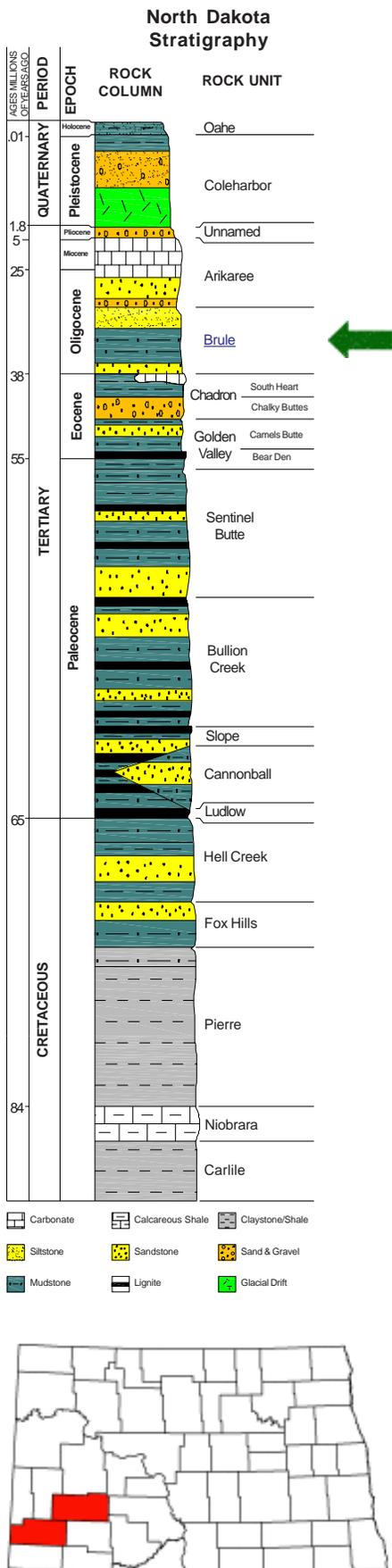
Three-toed horse skeleton (cast) of *Mesohippus bairdi* on exhibit at the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame Museum in Medora. [Brule](#) Formation. Stark County. Height at shoulder 465 mm.

Description:

Mesohippus was one of the early species of horses that lived in North Dakota during the Oligocene about 30 million years. It superficially resembled the modern horse except it was much smaller, only about 2 feet tall at the shoulder and up to 4 feet long. They were about the size of a greyhound dog. They had slender limbs adapted for trotting and running. *Mesohippus* also had three toes on each foot in contrast to the modern horse that has one. The teeth of *Mesohippus* were also different than today's horse. Their teeth were low crowned and therefore adapted to browse leaves from bushes and trees.



Mesohippus in a savanna habitat. Painting by Michael R. Long, courtesy of The Natural History Museum, London.



Locations where fossils have been found