

The Fossil Trade-Preserving History Or Selling Out

Should dinosaur remains found in the US be considered a protected cultural heritage or an economic asset?

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, USA, October 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Should dinosaur remains

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Everett Stern

found in the US be considered a protected cultural heritage or an economic asset? That is a question dividing investors, paleontologists, scientists, museums and auction houses. The market for dinosaur bones is large and growing larger. The Gobi Desert in Mongolia is where the first dinosaur egg was discovered nearly 100 years ago by American paleontologist Roy Chapman Andrews, the inspiration for the character Indiana Jones. Despite Mongolia’s ban on selling or exporting dinosaur remains, the US Immigration and Custom Enforcement intercepted \$44 million of dinosaur remains over a five-year period. That is just the tip of the iceberg. The international trade in

fossil remains known as “dragon bones” for “alternative medicine” was estimated to be worth \$700 million annually in 2010 and it has grown exponentially in the last decade.

Not surprisingly, the dream of possible riches under foot on private lands where property rights hold sway in the US and trading in dinosaur bones is legal has drawn together amateur collectors, paleontologists, deep pocketed investors and museums. It has also attracted anonymous buyers and concerns about money laundering. Fueling the market demand for dinosaurs has been significant Chinese investment in a Museum of Natural History, announced in the summer of 2023. This venture aims to procure a substantial quantity of American fossils, offering brokers the opportunity to sell at a premium and increase the value of the fossils through their exhibition in a reputable museum.

Those who promote this market say that these pricey investments, well out of the financial reach of domestic US museums, is the best way to ensure that the remains are property taken care of.

Catherine Badgley, former president of the US Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP) that represents more than 2,200 international paleontologists disagrees, “The commodification is in

principle inappropriate because it motivates unscrupulous people.”

With high demand driving exorbitant prices in global markets combined with lax enforcement in certain regions, unscrupulous brokers take advantage of these dynamics. “There is a need for greater awareness, oversight and stricter government enforcement to protect our rich fossil legacy so it remains intact for future generations to enjoy and study”, said Everett Stern author of a recent [report on fossil trades](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/fossil-trade-preserving-history-selling-out-exploring-everett-stern). (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/fossil-trade-preserving-history-selling-out-exploring-everett-stern>)

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