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Stegosaurus fossil may be largest ever found

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The Pueblo Chieftain

CANON CITY — A huge stegosaurus dinosaur fossil discovered in the Garden Park area here last month may be the most complete stegosaurus skeleton ever found.

Denver Museum of Natural History paleontologists are back in Garden Park this week finishing excavation work on the stegosaurus.

It was discovered in mid-June by Bryan Small of the museum.

"This is a very exciting find," Small said. "At least 70 percent of the skeleton has been fitted and we expect to recover maybe 90 percent."

"I won't be surprised if we find a few toes missing," Small said.

The skeleton is the third stegosaurus skeleton to be unearthed in Garden Park.

One stegosaurus skeleton, found here in 1886, is on display at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

That specimen had a skull, but just a few other skeletal remains.

Another stegosaurus fossil was excavated in 1930, but it did not have a skull.

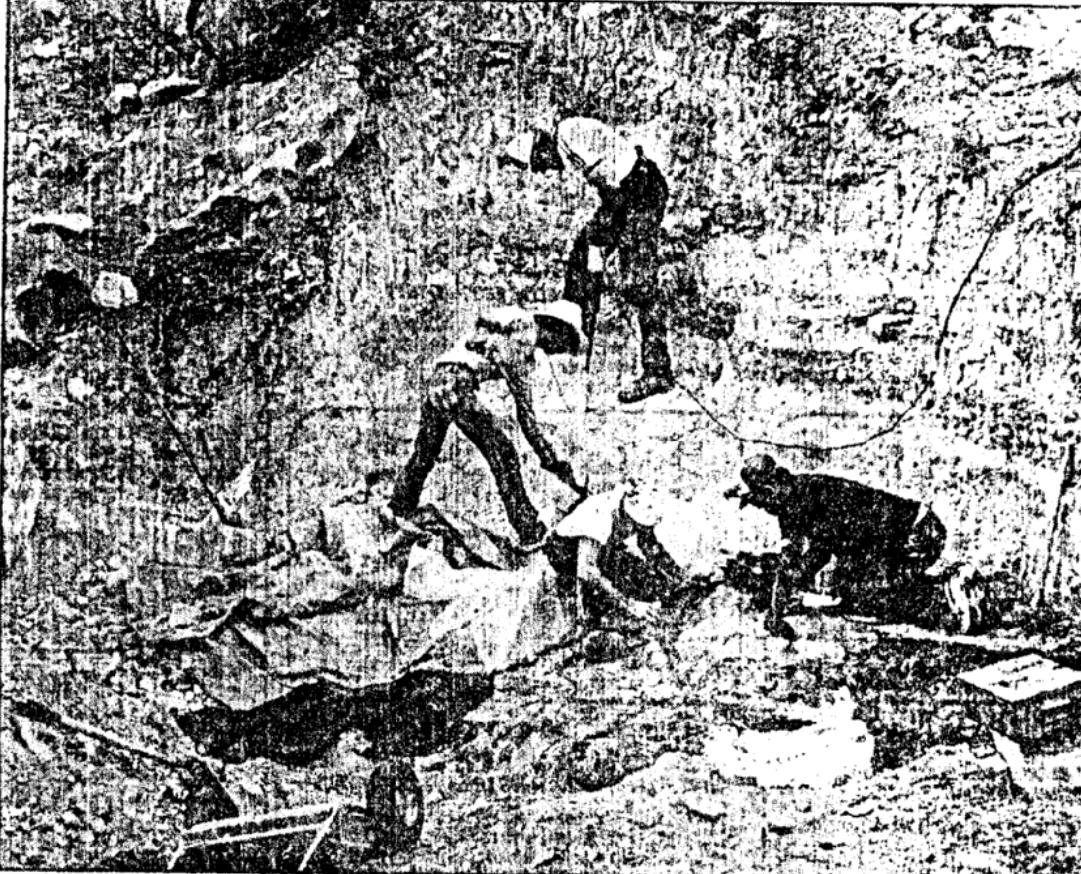
That specimen is on display at the Denver Museum of Natural History.

"It is most unusual to have a complete intact skull. It is a particularly large stegosaurus specimen, probably 25-feet long or so," Small said.

The new stegosaurus is about 25 percent larger than the other skeletons found. It is believed to have died of old age about 140 to 150 million years ago.

"The dinosaur died on the edge of a river channel and was covered during flooding with clay layers," Small said.

Paleontologists have discovered other fossils in the same area with the stegosaurus. They recovered a 14-inch saurian backbone and a few other epod bones located under-



Denver Museum of Natural History workers returned to the Garden Park Dinosaur fossil area in Canon City . . . they're trying to finish excavating a huge stegosaurus skeleton

neath the hips of the stegosaurus, according to Linda Carlson of the Garden Park Paleontology Society.

Other fossils recovered are crocodile pelvis bones, lung fish teeth, plus toes and vertebrae of a crow-sized dinosaur.

Paleontologists will begin to cover bones in plaster today in preparation for shipping to the museum, where the bones will be

cleaned and studied in the lab.

All four of the stegosaurus tail spikes have been discovered. The first spike was found early on, leading workers to believe the end of the tail might be lost.

But later paleontologists unearthed the remaining three tail spikes.

The three spikes were found in a row, one right next to each other, just as they would be

found on an undisturbed skeleton.

Armed with the tail spikes and throat bones, the plant-eating stegosaurus was probably very able to protect itself from other Garden Park predators such as the allosaurus and the horn-nosed soratosaurus.

The skeleton should be completely excavated by the end of next week.

Meanwhile, Denver paleontologists, Park Paleontology Society members, and Bureau of Land Management representatives are seeking out new sites.

The society and the museum are working to develop a plan for a national educational center in the Garden Park area.