

Dear Teachers and Coordinators:

Thank you for making your school's reservation with the Natural History Museum. We regret to inform you that the Dinosaur Hall has been officially closed as of February 11, 2008 as well as the Prehistoric Mammal Hall, which will close March 31, 2008, for renovation and retrofitting. They are scheduled to reopen beginning in 2010. The development of the new Dinosaur Hall is part of the Museum's current project to re-design and seismically strengthen its original 1913 building.

Welcome, Thomas!

Although our Dinosaur Hall will be closed, we are pleased to announce the opening of the Museum's newest Dinosaur experience, ***Thomas the T. rex Lab***, scheduled to open March 30, 2008. ***Thomas the T. rex Lab*** is a specially designed workroom where visitors may watch the actual work of paleontologists as they prepare and assemble the fossils of a 66 million year old *Tyrannosaurus rex* nicknamed "Thomas." Destined for permanent installation in the Museum's newly renovated Dinosaur Hall, Thomas is estimated to be a rare, 70% complete *T. rex* specimen. It is one of 30 partially complete *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeletons in collections worldwide.

As a specimen of a young adult, Thomas will provide another link in the chain of life histories shown in the Museum's remarkable *T. rex* growth series. The future home for this series, scheduled to open in 2011, will be in the Museum's newly renovated Dinosaur Hall.

Finding "Thomas"

Thomas died 66 million years ago in a sand bar of a meandering river, on what is now federal land in southeastern Montana. The Museum's Dinosaur Institute began preparing Thomas immediately after the initial field season (three summer field expeditions were conducted between 2003 and 2005). Nearly half of the collected fossils have now been prepared and documented, while Thomas's larger elements, such as the pelvic bones and hind limb, will be prepared in the public viewing lab.

Work conducted in the new lab is expected to solve mysteries about Thomas, such as the nature of the injuries and diseases this prehistoric animal might have suffered. Other information developed in the lab may come through the examination of additional skeletal discoveries. Despite his nickname, Thomas's sex has not been conclusively determined, but this situation would change with the discovery of the medullary bone, a reservoir of calcium in the female *T. rex*.

School Visits has attached a Thomas Fact Sheet. You can also find further information about this exhibit as well as all the other Museum exhibits at www.nhm.org. ***Capacities for the lab will be limited, please understand that not all school groups will be admitted.*** If you have any questions you may contact the School Visits Office at (213) 763-3529. We are looking forward to seeing you on your school visit day!

Thank you,

The School Visits Team