



# NEWS

Contact: Jennifer Westfall, 213.763.3538, [jwestfal@nhm.org](mailto:jwestfal@nhm.org)  
Katie Dunham, 213.763.3580, [kdunham@nhm.org](mailto:kdunham@nhm.org)

## **Dinosaur Institute Unveiled** ***National and International Research Facility Aims to Make NHM the Center for Dinosaur Study on West Coast***

Los Angeles — On April 8, 2006, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County announced the opening of its Dinosaur Institute, and the appointment of Dr. Luis Chiappe as its Director.

Housed within the Museum, the Institute will conduct national and international research on dinosaurs and other ancient animals. It also plans an aggressive field program, aimed to substantially increase the Museum's dinosaur holdings.

With heightened research and collecting, the Institute will expand the level of mentorship and training, and build further alliances with universities and museums worldwide. "The creation of the Dinosaur Institute is a step forward in the Museum's commitment to dinosaur science and education," says Chiappe. "The Natural History Museum is in a unique position. This institution is the only museum on the West Coast that has the collections and resources to become the standard reference for anyone interested in dinosaurs."

Chiappe recently made widespread news by describing a new species of dinosaur from Germany. The *Juravenator*, 150 million years old, may force scientists to rethink how and when feathers evolved.

The Dinosaur Institute's fieldwork plans and research collaborations are already in motion. In December 2005, Chiappe and Paleontological Preparator Doug Goodreau worked together with the staff of the Carmen Funes Museum (Plaza Huincul, Argentina) collecting 85-million-year-old fossils in Patagonia. The National Geographic Society-funded expedition found the remains of sauropods (long-necked dinosaurs) and small meat-eating theropod dinosaurs.

Then in January of this year, Chiappe and Graduate Student-in-Residence Jingmai O'Connor traveled to China to study a diversity of 120-million-year-old birds, fossils that add further support to the evolutionary connection between dinosaurs and birds. The Dinosaur Institute has collaborative projects with institutions in Beijing and Dalian. Several staff members from the Dalian Natural History Museum will conduct internships at the Dinosaur Institute during the summer and spring to conduct research and training on a series of Chinese fossils.

The Institute has also established collaborative projects in Europe. In addition to the recently published German dinosaur, Dr. Chiappe is studying dinosaurs from Kazakhstan in association with the staff from the University College Dublin (Ireland). Recently prepared at the Dinosaur Institute, these fossils will be exhibited at Dublin's Natural History Museum.

The Institute is also a partner in a collaborative project with the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid (Spain). The goal of this project is to build an animatronic model of the famous ancient bird *Archaeopteryx* that is able to fly in a wind tunnel.

Closer to home, the Institute is planning a reconnaissance fieldtrip to western Arizona in May and a large-scale summer expedition to the dinosaur-rich badlands of eastern Montana.

The Vertebrate Paleontology collection at the Natural History Museum already contains one of the largest collections of fossil vertebrates in North America. The Dinosaur Institute houses important dinosaur fossils as well as a significant collection of other reptiles and mammals that also lived during the Mesozoic Era.

**FOR MEDIA:**

1. Interviews with Luis Chiappe can be scheduled by calling (213) 763-3540.
2. Photos and renderings of the Dinosaur Institute specimens, as well as color images of Chiappe, are available.

**THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is located at 900 Exposition Boulevard. The Museum is open seven days a week, 9:30 am to 5 pm on weekdays, and 10 am to 5 pm on weekends and holidays. Admission is \$9 for adults, \$6.50 for students and seniors; and \$2 for children 5-12. For 24-hour Museum information please call (213) 763-DINO or visit [www.nhm.org](http://www.nhm.org).