

Observatory | Henry Fountain

Two-Pound Dinosaur Holds North American Record

Small dinosaurs are big these days. Researchers recently announced the discovery of a tiny prototype of a Tyrannosaurus from China. Now paleontologists are reporting the smallest dinosaur ever found in North America.

The animal, *Fruitadens haagarorum*, had a body length of about 30 inches and weighed an esti-

generally ate plants, and “plant eaters require a fairly large gut,” said Luis M. Chiappe, director of the museum’s Dinosaur Institute and a co-author of a paper describing the finding in *The Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*. The small size of *Fruitadens* and an absence of grinding wear on its teeth, Dr.



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Fruitadens haagarorum is the smallest ornithischian dinosaur ever found.

mated 2 pounds. Fossils dating from the late Jurassic period were excavated in Colorado in the 1970s and kept at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, where they have now been studied and described by Richard J. Butler, of the Bavarian State Collection for Paleontology in Germany, and colleagues.

Fruitadens is also the smallest ornithischian dinosaur ever found. Ornithischians, one of the two main groups of dinosaurs,

Chiappe added, suggest it probably supplemented its diet with small animals and insects.

Fruitadens is one of a subgroup of ornithischians that survived for more than 100 million years. Dr. Chiappe said that dinosaur species became morphologically more specialized in evolution but that *Fruitadens* was “conventional and unspecialized.” That, he said, may be why the subgroup survived for so long: species like it were better able to adapt.