



Paleontologists search for dinosaur bones at a site on Mt. Kirkpatrick.

Photo by Andy Sajor / Special to The Antarctic Sun

Dinosaur hunters dig up new beast

By Kristan Hutchison
Sun staff

Wielding hammers, crowbars and dynamite, the dinosaur hunters tracked down a new animal, but they couldn't get all their quarry home.

Paleontologist Bill Hammer suspects the newly uncovered bones on Mt. Kirkpatrick could be the remains of a primitive sauropod, a type of herbivorous dinosaur with long neck and tail that lived from 248 million to 65 million years ago. Though Hammer won't know until he has time to study it back in the lab, it is likely to be a new species.

"Anything we find down here is very different from other parts of the world," Hammer said.

The last time Hammer visited Mt. Kirkpatrick, 13 years ago, he dug up the remains of the first, and only, carnivorous dinosaur found in Antarctica. The 22-foot cryolophosaurus turned out to be the oldest of its kind from anywhere in the world.

"We know very little about the early Jurassic, particularly on the southern continents," Hammer said. The only other Jurassic site in the southern hemisphere is in South Africa. With about 35 percent of the cryolophosaurus' skeleton, Hammer was able to create a model of the entire dinosaur. A month after Sept. 11 he picked up a full-sized reconstruction of the dinosaur skele-



Photo by Kristan Hutchison / The Antarctic Sun

Bill Hammer shows one of the new dinosaur bones found on Mt. Kirkpatrick

ton from a Canadian maker and tried to drive back across the border.

"It was too crazy a story to make up, but we still got hassled," said Hammer, who spent two hours convincing customs officials the dinosaur was legitimate. The skeleton is now displayed at Augustana University, where Hammer teaches.

This month Hammer led a team of six back to Mt. Kirkpatrick, hoping to retrieve any remaining cryolophosaurus bones, and find something new. He found about 35 more bones at the cryolophosaurus site, including vertebrae and a toe. The bones may belong to cryolophosaurus or other dinosaurs from the same site.

Marty Reed sets dynamite to crack open the rock above hidden dinosaur remains.

Photos by Andy Sajor / Special to The Antarctic Sun

About 100 feet above the cryolophosaurus, mountaineer Peter Braddock spotted another bit of exposed bone. He showed it to Hammer, who identified it as either part of a pelvis or shoulder of a sauropod.

Blaster Marty Reed set charges of dynamite near the surface of the rock at three foot intervals. A boom like fireworks exploded down the mountain, but only the six dinosaur hunters were close enough to hear it.

"The main thing is you have to use light charges so you fracture the rock," said Reed, who fractured the rock to within a foot of the bones.

From there the team worked with pick axes, rock hammers, crow bars and rock saws to free the beast locked in rock. The team retrieved about 1,500 lbs of rock and bone, but left more buried in the hillside.

"I'm happy with what we found," Hammer said. "There's still more going back in there. We probably have another whole season's work there."

Hammer also wanted to visit five other sites where dinosaurs may be hiding, but bad weather kept him from flying there. He believes many of the ridges between the peaks may hold Jurassic bones.

"There's actually a lot more out there than it appears on the map," Hammer said.

NSF funded research: Bill Hammer, Augustana College.



PALEOZOIC		MESOZOIC			CENOZOIC	
PERMIAN	248	206	JURASSIC	144	65	TERTIARY
				million years ago		
				CRETACEOUS		