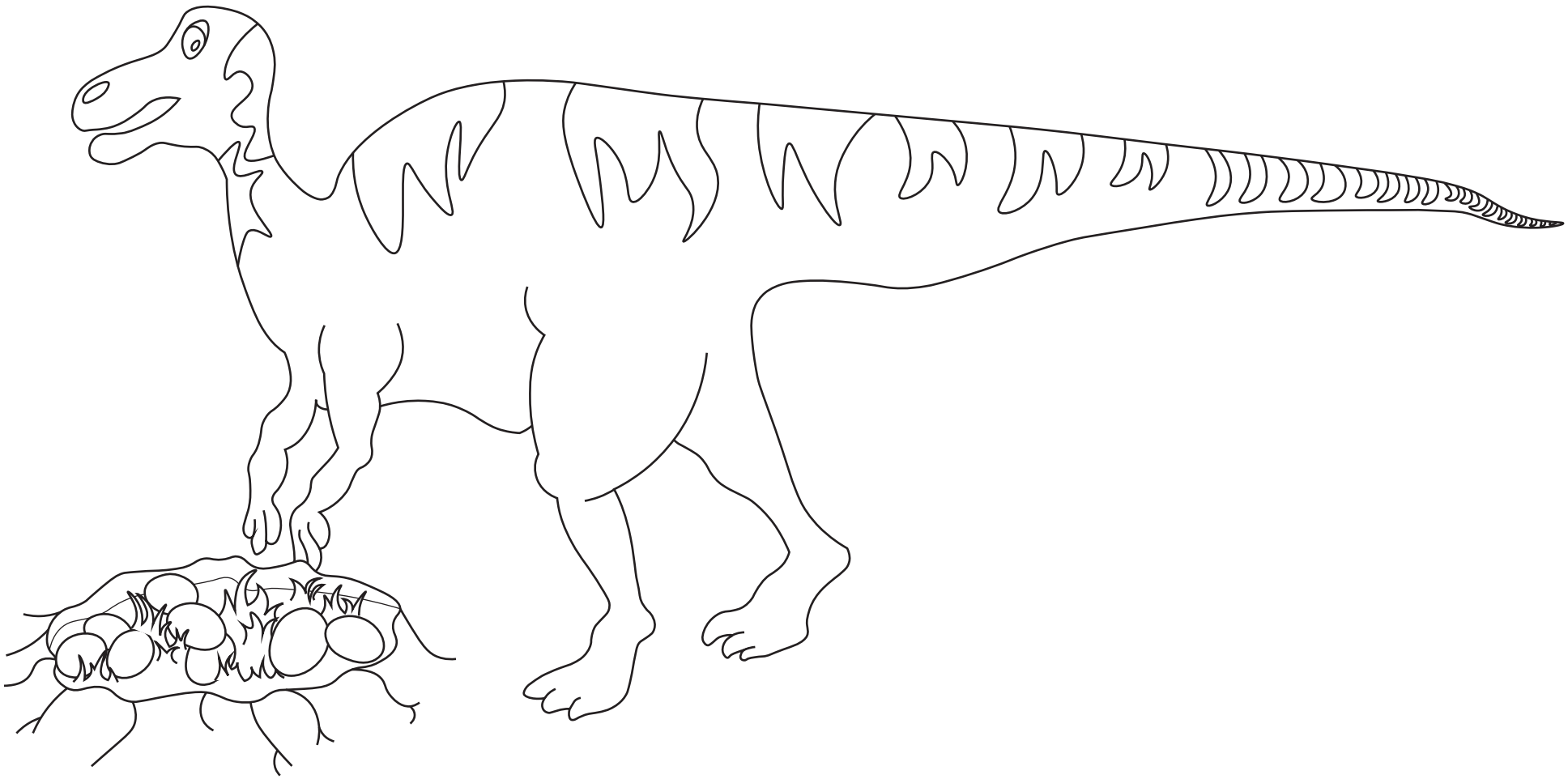
Maiasaura peeblesorum

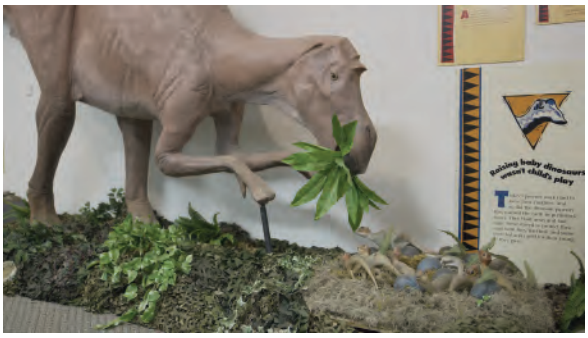


Maiasaura peeblesorum

Did you know there are 7 states that have not adopted a state fossil!? Montana, rich in dinosaur bones, is of course not one of those states. In fact, Montana was among the first fifteen states to adopt a state fossil, making the Maiasaura our Official State Fossil on February 22, 1985.

The Maiasaura marked an important discovery in Paleontology—dinosaurs (or at least this one), like many of today's animals cared for their young. The first of the Maiasaura were discovered at a site that is now known as "Egg Mountain" in Central Montana. This discovery is accredited to Dr. Jack Horner, the former Curator of Paleontology at the Museum of the Rockies and Jurrasic Park Consultant of Paleontology. The Maiasaura walked the earth during the Cretaceous Period, and is believed to have lived in herds given Dr. Horner's discovery. At this single location—Egg Mountain—near Choteau there were fully grown dinosaurs, as well as juveniles, and fossilized eggs. This find was imperative to understanding dinosaur biology as paleontologists were able to study each stage of development for a single species.

The real question though is how does a fossil become the "official" fossil for the state? The efforts of one man would not be enough. Ben Veach of the Montana State Council of Rocks and Minerals initiated a campaign to recognize the Maiasaura in Livingston, Montana. Helen Peterson's class of sixth-graders quickly picked up the campaign and, according to an article by Kevin Schindler, "they wrote letters to state officials and distributed petitions to other Montana schools, collecting more than 8,000 student signatures from 60 schools." As it turns out, it takes a village to make these decisions … a village and some Maiasaura shaped cookies, songs, the sporting of dinosaur t-shirts, poems, and speeches prepared by 130 Livingston students.



Fun Facts

Class: Hadrosaur
Adult Length: 25 feet
Adult Weight: 5 tons
Alive During: Cretaceous Period
Food Source: Herbivore

Looking for more Montana Dinosaur information? Check out the MT Dinosaur Trail: mtdinotrail.org

Did You Know?

Montana looked a lot different when dinosaurs roamed the earth. Nearly 144 to 65 million years ago (during the Cretaceous Period a significant portion of Montana was covered by shallow water. This water way was known as the Western Interior Seaway. This seaway effectively split North America in two and was home to diverse marine life.

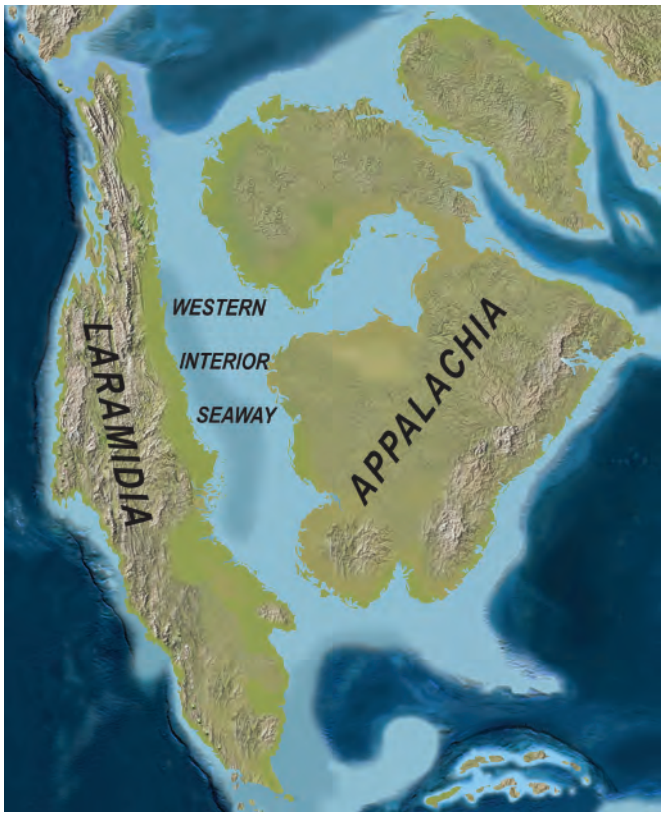


Image: Scott D. Sampson, Mark A. Loewen, Andrew A. Farke, Eric M. Roberts, Catherine A. Forster, Joshua A. Smith, Alan L. Titus

The sea was likely no more than 600 feet deep! In comparison, Flathead Lake near Kalispell is 4,450 feet deep.

The sea floor was made of soft, flat, oxygen-depleted mud which encouraged fossilization and left Montana rich in dinosaur bones!