



Bones for Barnum Brown: Adventures of a Dinosaur Hunter

Roland Bird

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Roland Thaxter Bird, universally and affectionately known to friends and associates as R. T., achieved a kind of Horatio Alger success in the scientific world of dinosaur studies. Forced to drop out of school at a young age by ill health, he was a cowboy who traveled from job to job by motorcycle until he met Barnum Brown, Curator of Vertebrae Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and a leader in the study of dinosaurs. Beginning in 1934, Bird spent many years as an employee of the museum and as Brown's right-hand man in the field. His chart of the Howe Quarry in Wyoming, a massive sauropod boneyard, is one of the most complex paleontological charts ever produced and a work of art in its own right. His crowning achievement was the discovery, collection, and interpretation of gigantic Cretaceous dinosaur trackways along the Paluxy River near Glen Rose and at Bandera, Texas. A trackway from Glen Rose is on exhibit at the American Museum and at the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin. His interpretation of these trackways demonstrated that a large carnosaur had pursued and attacked a sauropod, that sauropods migrated in herds, and that, contrary to then-current belief, sauropods were able to support their own weight out of deep water. These behavioral interpretations anticipated later dinosaur studies by at least two decades.

From his first meeting with Barnum Brown to his discoveries at Glen Rose and Bandera, this very human account tells the story of Bird's remarkable work on dinosaurs. In a vibrantly descriptive style, Bird recorded both the intensity and excitement of field work and the careful and painstaking detail of laboratory reconstruction. His memoir presents a vivid picture of camp life with Brown and the inner workings of the famous American Museum of Natural History, and it offers a new and humanizing account of Brown himself, one of the giants of his field.

Bird's memoir has been supplemented with a clear and concise introduction to the field of dinosaur study and with generous illustrations which delineate the various types of dinosaurs.

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