



**DINOSAURS IN THEIR TIME<sup>SM</sup>**  
Carnegie Museum of Natural History

What separates the really great dinosaur exhibits from all the rest? Real dinosaur skeletons.

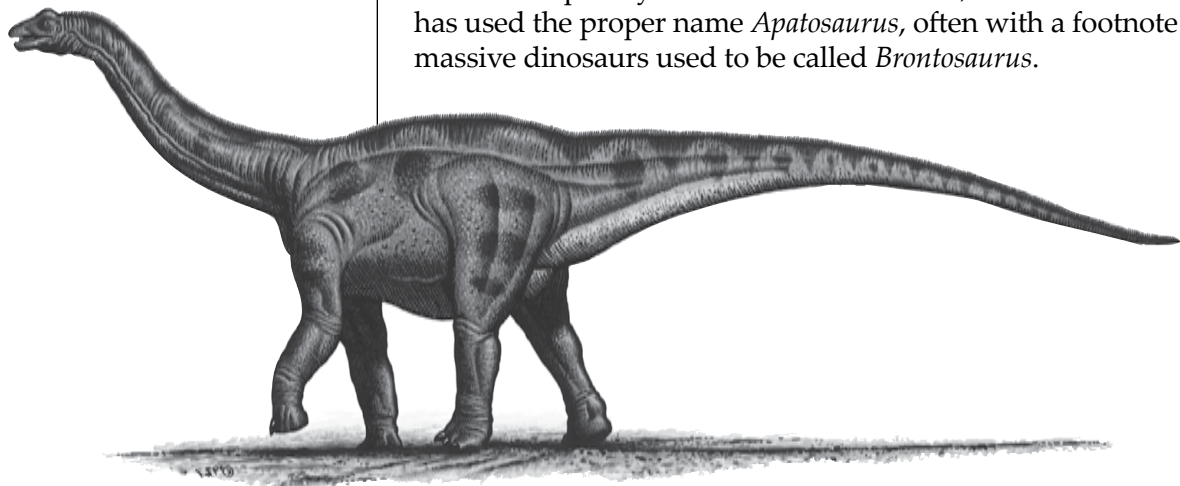
Of the 19 free-standing dinosaur skeletons roaming the halls of Dinosaurs in Their Time, 15 are the real deal (except for occasional filler bones, made from casts or sculpted pieces, here and there)—putting Carnegie Museum of Natural History in a very exclusive category.

# Apatosaurus

*Apatosaurus* was one of the larger members of the sauropod group and one of the largest animals known to have walked the Earth. Luckily, *Apatosaurus* lived at a time when lots of plants covered the land—some scientists believe this dinosaur ate more than one ton of plant material each day! To get such huge quantities of food, these beasts probably knocked down trees, trampled underbrush, and otherwise had a profound effect on their surroundings. Peg-like teeth lined the front of *Apatosaurus*' jaws, which were probably used to strip leaves from plants. *Apatosaurus* had no chewing teeth, but it may have swallowed stones (called gastroliths) along with its food that were stored, like the pebbles in a bird's gizzard, and used to help break up the plants *Apatosaurus* ate.

The enormous size of *Apatosaurus* was one of its defenses against enemies. The neck alone was about 20 feet long. *Apatosaurus*' huge legs rose up like bridge piers to support its heavy body. *Apatosaurus* also defended itself by gathering in herds and striking predators with its "whiplash"-like tail.

*Apatosaurus* may be this sauropod's correct scientific name, but it is also incorrectly identified as "*Brontosaurus*," a name meaning "thunder lizard." In 1877, a paleontologist named O. C. Marsh discovered a new kind of dinosaur, which he named *Apatosaurus*. Two years later, he discovered what he believed to be another type of dinosaur. He named this one *Brontosaurus*. However, when paleontologists later examined the two fossils, they determined that both skeletons belonged to the same kind of animal. Since *Apatosaurus* was discovered and named first, it became the official name. *Brontosaurus*, however, had captured the imagination of the public. It was not until the 1980s, when the U. S. Post Office issued a stamp depicting the creature with its improper name, that most people even became aware of the controversy. The stamps were subsequently recalled. Since that time, most dinosaur literature has used the proper name *Apatosaurus*, often with a footnote that these massive dinosaurs used to be called *Brontosaurus*.



## About CMNH's *Apatosaurus*

In August 1909, Earl Douglass of Carnegie Museum discovered eight sauropod tail bones on a sandstone ledge in the area now known as Dinosaur National Monument and began an excavation. When Douglass' work crew had finished, they had dug up an almost complete *Apatosaurus* skeleton, lacking only a few bones—one of the most complete skeletons of its kind found thus far. Even though no skull was found attached to the skeleton, one was found in the quarry. However, it did not look as the scientists expected—rather than being short and boxy like the skull of *Camarasaurus*, it was long and low like the skull of *Diplodocus*. Because of a disagreement among paleontologists over whether this skull actually belonged to *Apatosaurus* or not, the skeleton was mounted without a head and named *Apatosaurus louisae* in honor of Louise Carnegie, Andrew Carnegie's wife. The skeleton remained headless for more than 20 years.

Later, a cast of an adult *Camarasaurus* skull was mounted with the *Apatosaurus* skeleton. This skull remained on the skeleton for more than 30 years, until CMNH paleontologist Dr. David S Berman discovered that the *Diplodocus*-like skull, originally found with the skeleton, really did belong to *Apatosaurus*.

Oct. 20, 1979, was designated "Dinosaur Day" at CMNH. On that date, the *Camarasaurus* skull was replaced with the correct head. The celebration also commemorated the 70th anniversary of the discovery of the *Apatosaurus louisae* skeleton—one of CMNH's several holotypes, which are the specimens that forever define a species (usually the first or the most complete specimen discovered).

