



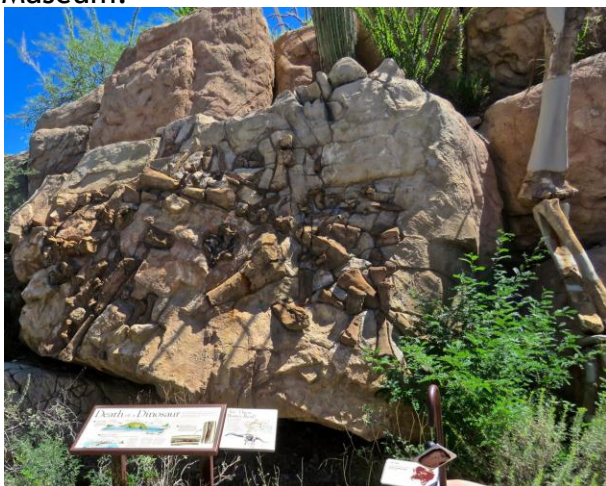
Arizona Rocks 59

Text and photos by Ray Grant

Arizona has an official state dinosaur. Governor Ducey signed a bill this month making *Sonorasaurus thompsoni* the official dinosaur of Arizona. The dinosaur was found in 1994 by Rich Thompson in Pima County near Sonoita. It was named for the discoverer and the Sonoran Desert.

Sonorasaurus is related to the sauropods, large four footed plant eaters. It was big, 27 feet tall; 50 feet long and weighed around 4,000 pounds. It is Mesozoic Era, Middle Cretaceous Period, in age, about 100 million years old. There are very few Mesozoic age rocks (age of the dinosaurs) in southern Arizona so this was the first dinosaur found here. There are many more rocks of this age found on the Colorado Plateau and many dinosaur fossils.

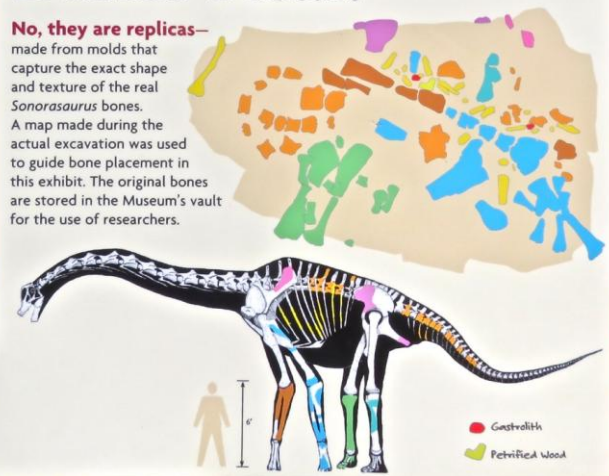
The dinosaur fossil is kept at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson and they have great display about it. They have constructed a replica of the fossil bed with the dinosaur and have made a model of one of the legs, so if you want to learn more about our state dinosaur make a trip to the Desert Museum.



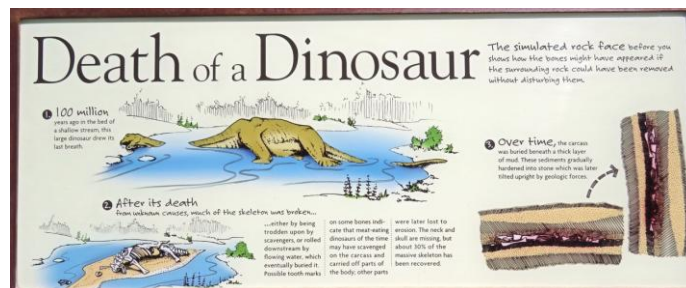
Replica of the fossil bed where *Sonorasaurus* was found at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Are These Bones Real?

No, they are replicas— made from molds that capture the exact shape and texture of the real *Sonorasaurus* bones. A map made during the actual excavation was used to guide bone placement in this exhibit. The original bones are stored in the Museum's vault for the use of researchers.



Sign with the replica showing the different bones (Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum)



Another sign with the *Sonorasaurus* exhibit (Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum)



Model of *Sonorasaurus* leg at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum