

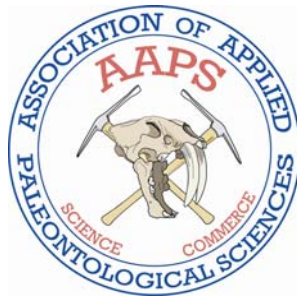
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Press Release – For Immediate release

“AAPS Response to ThinkGeek’s Dinosaur Bone Sales”

The Association of Applied Paleontologists (AAPS) would like to address the current issue regarding the sale of fossil bones on the “ThinkGeek” website and support efforts to bring science to the masses.

It is legal, moral and ethical to buy, sell, trade and barter fossils collected from private land in the United States. There are laws and regulations that prohibit the collection and sale of fossils collected on public (government) owned lands without specific permitting and curation of those fossils. Poaching is a problem on both sides (public and private land) and law enforcement deals with these issues when they arise.

In the UK, Japan, and most of Europe and Africa, the sale of fossils is condoned, encouraged and beneficial. Most independent (commercial) paleontologists are interested in furthering the science of paleontology and provide an important service by collecting fossils that would otherwise be lost to science due to weathering, construction, etc. in a very short period of time.

Independent paleontology provides a very important service by providing not only the general public but most museums with fossils for display and research. Many independent paleontologists work hand in hand with academic paleontologists to insure that scientifically important specimens are not lost but placed in safe and secure institutions where they can be displayed and studied. This is stated in the AAPS code of ethics. *Strive to place specimens of unique scientific interest into responsible hands for study, research and preservation.* (<http://www.aaps.net/ethics.htm>)

There are not enough academic paleontologists in the world to adequately collect even a small fraction of the millions of fossils that erode out and are destroyed every year, or to come close to the amount of fossils preserved through collecting on private lands and made available to collectors and science. None of these facilities have the space, money or inclination to preserve non-scientifically important parts and pieces of fossils found on government lands in their collections. Hence, they lie on the ground and erode to dust.

Once a bone has dissolved into parts and pieces, researchers/collectors can continue to excavate the area in the hopes of recovering more of the skeleton if it still exists, but most of our experience has shown that ninety-nine percent of all specimens found are simply isolated bones and not associated with even partial skeletons. Furthermore, most of these isolated bones are broken into dozens to hundreds of small pieces and missing pieces that will never be found. From a scientific standpoint, they teach us little (a Triceratops lived once (which we know), it died upstream (no surprise), and was deposited in this layer (middle of the Hell Creek- again no surprise). That's it.

Though they might be a loose bone or even a fragment we realize they are not worthless despite their condition. They still have an educational value. Fragments like this are far more valuable in the hands of young child or collector to spark a lifelong curiosity about science. Most professional collectors recognize this and strive to educate and stimulate the public's imagination about these creatures from our past.

The sale of fossils benefits the world by getting many young people encouraged in science, which we are sure is part of the reason you chose to offer fossils on your site. For many, owning a fossil is the turning point in their life that leads them to wonder about the past and dream of making some wonderful discovery someday on their own. We applaud the efforts of ThinkGeek to bring this out in young and old alike on their site.

Sincerely,

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