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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **“Fossils Held in Scientific Darkness Now Have a New Lease on Life”**

For several decades a controversy over the ability to publish research on privately held fossils has been brewing among members of the paleontological community. A coalition of private and public paleontologists have banded together to find a solution to this long-standing dilemma. This month, a new online journal called the “Journal of Paleontological Sciences” (JPS) is scheduled to be released that addresses the concerns of academia, helps bridge the gap between private and public paleontologists and allows for the publication of privately held fossil specimens.

Some academic paleontologists are concerned that scientifically significant fossil specimens, held in private hands, may become inaccessible to researchers. Specimens held in private hands are often more difficult to track and there are concerns that those specimens might become lost to science either by disappearing through sale, trade, loan, inheritance or by the private title holders refusing access. Many mainstream paleontological journals (such as the “Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology, Journal of Paleontology, etc.) do not publish on privately held specimens for these reasons. The Association of Applied Paleontological Sciences (AAPS) thinks it has found an answer to this dilemma.

According to Dr. Ken Carpenter, curator for the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, “Lurking in many private collections are valuable fossil treasures, which remain unknown to the rest of the world. This is the first journal that gives an outlet to the amateur and commercial paleontologist to try their hand at writing a scientific article.” Walter Stein, chairman of the JPS Publication Committee, states, “This current publication ban has resulted in nearly every privately held specimen to become effectively “lost to science” since no data or very little data on them can currently be published in the mainstream scientific journals. Since literally thousands of important specimens (including dinosaur, fossil mammal, bird, fish, marine reptile, invertebrate, etc.) are currently held in private hands and some will no doubt remain private indefinitely, a great deal of data that could be accessed is not being researched sufficiently. It’s simple,” Stein says, “the more specimens that are available to research, the closer our hypotheses are to the truth. This new journal provides access to research and specimens that have largely been ignored.” These specimens could potentially alter many of our current hypotheses of the history of life on this planet.

The journal and its associated website are sponsored by AAPS, a group of several hundred members from around the world who deal in commercial and amateur paleontology. The website is the end product of a two year project looking into the ethics and feasibility of tracking, documenting, and publishing on privately-held fossil specimens. The website is free of charge and open to anyone interested in fossils. It will have several sections including a specimen registry where significant fossils and their important contextual information can be recorded, tracked and viewed by researchers and enthusiasts. It will also have a

photographic image registry where images of privately held fossil specimens may be downloaded. This type of registry has never been available before.

The journal section of the website will publish scientific articles in all aspects of paleontology. Each manuscript will be professionally peer-reviewed by two reviewers from a pool of over 20 academic paleontologists enlisted to help ensure quality. Manuscripts which base their conclusions on privately held specimens are carefully scrutinized and there are strict rules regarding future accessibility to the fossils.

At the end of each year, journal articles deemed to be of the highest significance will be published in an annual printed edition available for a small fee. The journals new website can be found at [www.aaps-journal.org](http://www.aaps-journal.org) .

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For more information or to schedule interviews, please contact Walter W. Stein at 605-892-2634

ABOUT THE AAPS: AAPS, The Association of Applied Paleontological Sciences (formerly, The American Association of Paleontological Suppliers) was organized in 1978 to create a professional association of commercial fossil dealers, collectors, enthusiasts, and academic paleontologists for the purpose of promoting ethical collecting practices and cooperative liaisons with researchers, instructors, curators and exhibit managers in the paleontological academic and museum community. The website can be found at [www.aaps.net](http://www.aaps.net)