

New Species of Allosaurus Discovered in Utah

(February 2020)

In 1877, the *Allosaurus*, a large carnivorous predator was first described by renowned paleontologist Othniel Charles Marsh. Over the years, it became one of the most popular dinosaurs in the world. The *Allosaurus fragilis* is the most abundant species of *Allosaurus*. In fact, so many of its fossils were found in Utah, it became the state fossil in 1988. By the early 1990s, paleontologists unearthed yet another fossil, this time of *Allosaurus fragilis*' older cousin—*Allosaurus jimmadseni*—in Dinosaur National Monument in northeastern Utah. Now, another, more recently discovered specimen of *Allosaurus jimmadseni* has been revealed at the Natural History Museum of Utah.

Allosaurus jimmadseni roamed the flood plains of western North America during the Late Jurassic Period, between 157 to 152 million years ago. That makes it geologically the oldest species of *Allosaurus*. Despite being older, it had a lot of the same characteristics as its younger relatives: it walked on two legs and liked to eat meat. However, *Allosaurus jimmadseni* had several distinct features that made it stand out from other Allosauruses. For starters, it had a short, narrow skull with facial crests that extended from horns in front of its eyes all the

way down to its nose. Its skull was more delicate and its vision weaker than *Allosaurus fragilis*. To be fair, *Allosaurus jimmadseni* lived at least 5 million years earlier than *fragilis*, who had a lot more time to evolve some interesting characteristics. Nonetheless, *Allosaurus jimmadseni* was the most common—and the most ferocious—predator of its ecosystem. That’s because even though it wasn’t the biggest dinosaur, it was built to hunt! It had long legs and arms. Even its tail was rather long. It had three very sharp claws on each of its forelimbs and a mouth full of serrated teeth, perfect for cutting into flesh. It likely used its formidable choppers to dine on smaller dinosaurs. Adults probably hunted in small groups and overpowered their unlucky prey. Juveniles hunted small vertebrates because their long legs made them really fast.

After more than 150 years of exploring, finding a new species of dinosaur is both surprising and exciting. It’s also a good reminder that fossil rocks still hold many more hidden treasures for paleontologists to find. Who knows how many more hidden fossils await us? Perhaps there’s one even more fantastic than the *Allosaurus jimmadseni*.

Teacher Resources – Vocabulary

Potential Words for Further Study: These words not only help with comprehension of the passage, they also appear more frequently in a wide spectrum of reading, especially in academic text. Therefore, further study of the meaning of these words may be beneficial. The words in this list can be incorporated into subsequent lessons.

Wilson Reading System Vocabulary Level: AB

abundant (adj) very plentiful; more than sufficient; ample

fossil (n) any hardened remains or imprints of plant or animal life of some previous geologic period, preserved in the earth's crust, including petrified wood and various resins

unearth (v) to dig up from out of the earth

Words for Quick Discussion: Consider discussing these words as they are encountered to help students comprehend the passage. A quick discussion in student-friendly language while reading the text is best.

Wilson Reading System Vocabulary Level: B

carnivorous (adj) flesh-eating

formidable (adj) causing fear or dread

predator (n) a predatory person or animal

specimen (n) a part of a whole, or one individual of a class or group, used as a sample or example of the whole, class, or group; typical part, individual, etc.

vertebrates (n) any of a large subphylum (Vertebrata) of chordate animals, including all mammals, fishes, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, characterized by a brain enclosed in a brainpan and a segmented spinal column

***Definition Source:** Collins English Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english>*

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1. Visit the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor website at <http://tea.cohmetrix.com/>. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
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6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
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