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Canadian museum unveils long, long-lost dinosaur

REUTERS

By Claire Sibonney

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Canada's Royal Ontario Museum unveiled the skeleton of a massive dinosaur on Wednesday that had been lost for decades -- in its own collection.

The 25-metre (85-foot) long Barosaurus, the largest dinosaur ever to go on permanent display in Canada, is part of a new exhibit at the museum's "crystal" addition, which will open to the public on December 15.

"This one has a special place in my heart because of the detective story that went into finding it," ROM curator David Evans said at a press conference.

Evans made the discovery of the rare specimen after he had gone searching for a Sauropod in the United States to round out the museum's existing T. Rex, Triceratops and Stegosaurus collection. On the plane, he read an old article that said the museum in downtown Toronto already had exactly what he was looking for.

"My jaw dropped," said Evans, 27, in an interview. "I just wanted to turn the plane around and come back and root through the collection to see what we had."

The Barosaurus was affectionately nicknamed "Gordo" after the late Gordon Edmund, the curator who originally brought it to the museum in 1962.

Because the ROM did not have the space to display the assembled creature when the skeleton was obtained, the bones were divided among various collections, but without a note saying they belonged to a single animal.

"It's really an exciting day, especially here at the ROM, because I first saw dinosaur skeletons here when I was 4 or 5 years old, and to be part of the rebirth of the dinosaur exhibit at this great museum is really special," said Evans.

"Over the last two days I've spent every moment watching it like an expectant father as it was being put together."

Gordo, who would have weighed in at about 15 tonnes when he was alive, was a herbivore with an extremely long neck and remarkably tiny head in comparison to the rest of its body.

His home will be the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal addition, designed by renowned architect Daniel Libeskind and opened this past summer. It will be the new permanent exhibit space for two galleries of 350 dinosaur and mammal fossils.

"You will see every little tooth, every little bone, every little frill on the back of their neck," said the ROM's director and chief executive, William Thorsell.

"I think you'll see them almost as works of art as well as nature."

In order to accommodate the collection, Thorsell said the ROM had to raise the height of the new space and add steel bracing to the floors in order to hold the fossilized bones.

(Editing by Rob Wilson)



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