Cuban Fossils Offer Support for Meteor's Role in Dinosaur Extinction

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

No genus materialized. Even so, the scientists knew they had found something important—possibly the cause of an important evolutionary shift in the history of life on Earth.

For years, a team of scientists has been studying a sample of dinosaur fossils that they believe are from the Cretaceous period, which ended about 65 million years ago. The team's findings suggest that the dinosaurs were not alone in the world, but that other creatures, including humans, may have also been affected by the event.

In the late 1990s, scientists from the University of Texas at Austin and the University of California, Berkeley, discovered a small number of dinosaur fossils in Cuba. These fossils were sent to the Natural History Museum in New York City, where they were studied using a variety of techniques, including X-ray imaging and computerized tomography.

The team found that the fossils were from a group of small, armored dinosaurs known as ornithopods. These creatures were similar to the dinosaurs that lived in North America during the same time period, but they had different adaptations for life in Cuba.

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"It's exciting," said lead scientist Dr. Robert T. Bakker. "These fossils provide important clues about the evolution of life on Earth."

Further studies of the fossils are ongoing, and the team hopes to publish their findings in a scientific journal soon.

Challenged by Creationists, Science Museums Start to Answer Back

Continued From First Science Page

program, said that within the last year or so efforts to train museum visitors and volunteers on evolution and related topics had substantially increased. "There is a growing awareness of the need to teach evolution in museums," he said. "We need to make sure that visitors understand the importance of evolution in understanding the history of life on Earth."