

Dinosaurs in Arkansas

The only rocks exposed in Arkansas from the Mesozoic Era are from the Cretaceous Period. During this period, marine animals swam in the shallow seas that crashed at the base of the Ouachita Mountains, while dinosaurs roamed the land and left their footprints on the mudflats of the shoreline. In 1983 and 2011, large dinosaur trackways were discovered in Howard County. The trackways included footprints from *Sauroposeidon*, a sauropod (“lizard-footed”) and *Acrocanthosaurus*, a theropod (“beast-footed”).

Sauroposeidon

Sauroposeidon is a genus of a large herbivorous sauropod dinosaur, related to *Brachiosaurus*, that lived about 110 million years ago (mya) during the Early Cretaceous Period. Its fossils have been found in many states including Oklahoma and Texas. In Arkansas, only its footprints have been left behind.

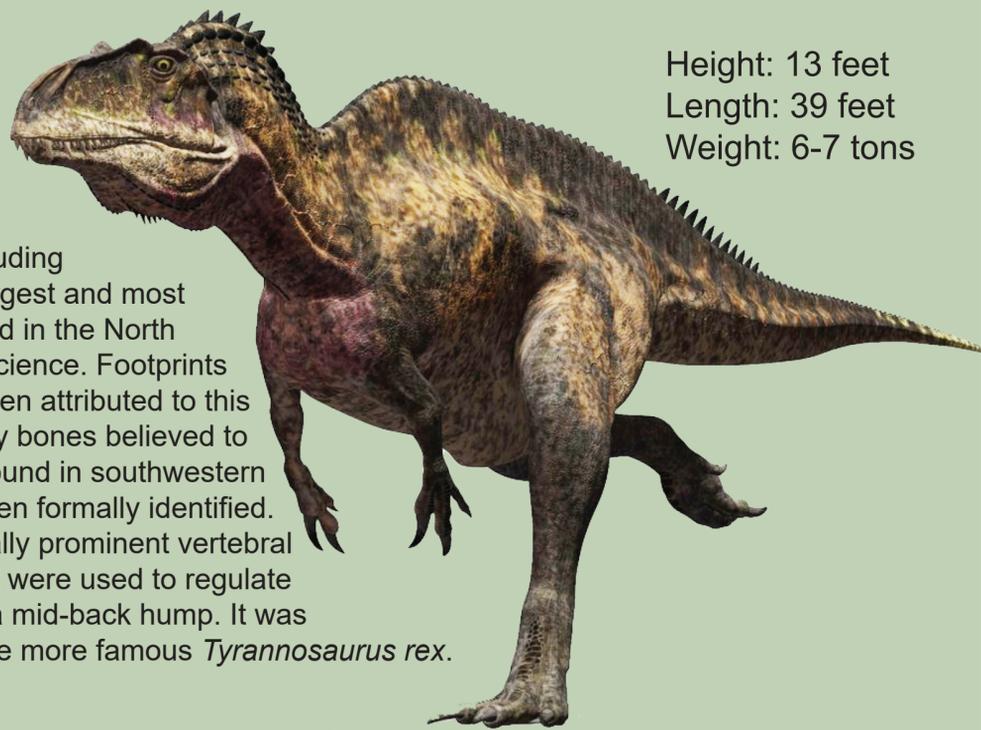
Height: 60 feet
Length: 92 feet
Weight: 55 tons



Acrocanthosaurus

Acrocanthosaurus, meaning “high-spined Lizard” was a theropod that existed during the Early Cretaceous Period, about 110 mya. Remains have been found in many states including Oklahoma and Texas. The largest and most famous skeleton is displayed in the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science. Footprints found in Arkansas have also been attributed to this carnivorous dinosaur. Recently bones believed to belong to this dinosaur were found in southwestern Arkansas, but have not yet been formally identified. *Acrocanthosaurus* had unusually prominent vertebral spines that scientists suspect were used to regulate heat or provide structure for a mid-back hump. It was just slightly smaller than the more famous *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

Height: 13 feet
Length: 39 feet
Weight: 6-7 tons



Arkansaurus fridayi

Height: 8 feet
Length: 13 feet
Weight: 300 pounds

The first documented dinosaur bones found in Arkansas were foot bones of the dinosaur that is now named *Arkansaurus fridayi*. It was discovered by Joe Friday in Lockesburg in 1972. *Arkansaurus* has been classified as an ornithomimosaur, meaning “ostrich-mimic dinosaur.” It was likely a swift, omnivorous hunter with a beak-like mouth, small head and large eyes, providing exceptionally good vision. Since then, more dinosaur bones have been found in southwestern Arkansas, but have not yet been formally identified.

Arkansaurus fridayi was named the official State Dinosaur in 2017.

