

Slow Italian, Fast Learning

Ep.378: An Enigmacursor wrapped in a riddle inside a mystery?

Italian	English
<p>Il Museo di Storia Naturale di Londra ospita circa 80 milioni di esemplari animali, e da oggi ne possiede uno in più.</p> <p>Tra l'impressionante collezione di dinosauri del museo, lo scheletro di un Enigmacursor è un nuovo reperto, relativamente piccolo, ma significativo.</p> <p>"So Enigmacursor is a small plant-eating dinosaur. It walked around on its hind legs, would have been quite a speedy runner. And it's a fairly rare animal from this time and from this part of the world. It comes from the Western USA, from Colorado, and it lived about 150 million years ago and would have be scuttling around the feet of more famous dinosaurs like Stegosaurus and Diplodocus."</p> <p>Il professor Paul Barratt, paleontologo del museo, ha contribuito con le sue ricerche all'identificazione di questa nuova specie di dinosauro.</p> <p>L'Enigmacursor si aggirava sulla Terra nel tardo Giurassico, ma è rimasto sconosciuto fino a quando uno scheletro straordinariamente intatto è stato portato alla luce da una cava quasi quattro anni fa.</p> <p>Inizialmente era stato descritto come un nanosauro, una specie poco conosciuta e registrata per la prima volta negli anni '70 del XIX secolo.</p> <p>Questo finché la scoperta del fossile non ha risolto un mistero allettante, come ha spiegato la professoressa Susannah Maidment:</p>	<p>London's Natural History Museum is home to some 80 million natural specimens - and now, it has one more.</p> <p>Among the museum's impressive dinosaur collection, the skeleton of an Enigmacursor is a relatively small, but significant, new exhibit.</p> <p>"So Enigmacursor is a small plant-eating dinosaur. It walked around on its hind legs, would have been quite a speedy runner. And it's a fairly rare animal from this time and from this part of the world. It comes from the Western USA, from Colorado, and it lived about 150 million years ago and would have be scuttling around the feet of more famous dinosaurs like Stegosaurus and Diplodocus."</p> <p>Professor Paul Barratt is a paleontologist at the museum, whose research helped identify this new dinosaur species.</p> <p>The Enigmacursor roamed over the Earth in the late Jurassic period but remained unknown until a remarkably intact skeleton was unearthed from a quarry nearly four years ago.</p> <p>It was initially described as a nanosaurus, a poorly known species first recorded in the 1870s.</p> <p>Until, that is, the fossil discovery solved a tantalising mystery, as Professor Susannah Maidment explains:</p>

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"Enigma means puzzle, of course, and this is in reference to this sort of complicated naming history of these sorts of dinosaurs. There's been up to eight or nine different names given to these fragmentary, tantalising remains, and we couldn't figure it out until we found this nice more complete skeleton, so that's the enigma part. Now cursor means runner, so this is in reference for the dinosaur's very long hind limbs and very big feet."

Oltre a zampe potenti ed enormi, l'Enigmacursor vanta una lunga ed ampia coda.

Con un'altezza di soli 64 centimetri e una lunghezza di 180 centimetri, è molto più piccolo di giganti giurassici come il Diplodoco, lungo 25 metri.

Ma per il professor Paul Barrett questa piccola creatura potrebbe far luce su come si sono sviluppati i suoi cugini più grandi.

"This little dinosaur fills an evolutionary gap. So it is somewhere in between the origin of the big group that includes things like Stegosaurus and Triceratops and their relatives, and the development of the weird features we see in those groups. So if you like, it's the template on which those weirder, bigger dinosaurs were built. And it helps us to understand how those different features started to come into existence. And it also shows us what these late Jurassic ecosystems were like. They weren't just dominated by huge long-necked dinosaurs or huge predators, but also a cast of characters of smaller dinosaurs that are making a living in different ways."

Sono ora necessarie ulteriori ricerche per confermare se anche altri esemplari precedentemente ritenuti nanosauri siano

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As well as powerful and huge feet, the Enigmacursor boasts a long swooping tail.

At just 64 centimeters tall and 180 centimeters long, it is much smaller than Jurassic giants like the 25-metre-long Diplodocus.

But Professor Paul Barrett says this small creature could shed light on how its bigger cousins developed.

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More research is now needed to confirm whether other specimens previously thought to be nanosaurus are also different species,



<p>specie diverse, cosa ritenuta molto probabile dalla professoressa Sarah Maidment.</p> <p>"It tells us that there were actually more of these small dinosaurs than we thought previously, because in our investigations in other US collections and museums, what we discovered was that there are a whole range of little fragments of bones that are different from Enigmacursor, but are from this sort of dinosaur. So we think that the diversity of these sorts of dinosaurs was greater than we previously realised."</p> <p>Il nome completo del dinosauro - Enigmacursor mollyborthwickae - attribuisce il merito al donatore privato che ha aiutato il Museo ad acquisire il fossile.</p> <p>Il professor Barrett ha affermato che vengono trovate continuamente nuove specie di dinosauri, ma la scoperta di uno scheletro come questo è rara.</p> <p>"All together we're naming about one new dinosaur per week around the world. So about 50 to 60 new dinosaurs get a name each year. So it's not super rare to name a new dinosaur, but it's always exciting to be involved in a new discovery."</p>	<p>very likely according to Professor Sarah Maidment.</p> <p>"It tells us that there were actually more of these small dinosaurs than we thought previously, because in our investigations in other US collections and museums, what we discovered was that there are a whole range of little fragments of bones that are different from Enigmacursor, but are from this sort of dinosaur. So we think that the diversity of these sorts of dinosaurs was greater than we previously realised."</p> <p>The dinosaur's full name - Enigmacursor mollyborthwickae - credits the private donor who helped the Museum acquire the fossil.</p> <p>Professor Barrett says new species of dinosaur are being found all the time, but the discovery of a skeleton such as this is rare.</p> <p>"All together we're naming about one new dinosaur per week around the world. So about 50 to 60 new dinosaurs get a name each year. So it's not super rare to name a new dinosaur, but it's always exciting to be involved in a new discovery."</p>
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Report by Edwina Guinan for SBS News.

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