

Reading Rocks

A Snapshot of a Cretaceous Forest

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Dinosaur Habitat Revealed

Sixty-seven million years ago, at the end of the Cretaceous Period, the Sustut Basin in northern British Columbia was a long, narrow valley full of lakes, streams, and rivers. To the east were the rising Omineca Mountains, and to the west, the Skeena Mountains. This was the home of Buster, one of the first dinosaurs discovered in BC.

Buster lived in a lush forest of ancient broad-leaved trees and the Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) (met-ah-seh-COY-yah glip-toe-stroh-BOY-dees). Over time, BC's tectonic plates have slipped past each other. Even though the Sustut Basin is found in northern BC today, this area may have been located as far south as the southern border of Oregon. The Sustut Basin covers a huge area of northern BC, and has rocks of the right age and type for finding dinosaurs.



A leaf fossil in the rocks found along the Sustut River in 2017 bears a striking resemblance to the leaves found there today. T. Cullen photograph.

Buster lived at the very end of the age of dinosaurs, within a million years of the mass extinction that killed all dinosaurs except birds. Finding more fossils in the Sustut Basin could help us understand how dinosaurs and their environments were changing right before this catastrophic event that changed the evolutionary trajectory of life on Earth.

In August 2019 the Royal BC Museum searched for fossils in another corner of the Sustut Basin, in Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park.