

The Iron Lizard

A new dinosaur discovered in northern British Columbia

By Curator of Palaeontology Dr. Victoria Arbour

Meet Buster

Dinosaurs once roamed British Columbia's ancient forests. Their fossils might not be as common here as in Alberta or Montana, but that's partly because the rocks where dinosaurs are found are harder to get to in BC. By exploring some of these hard-to-reach places in northern BC, palaeontologists are starting to learn more about which dinosaurs made their home here.

Nicknamed "Buster," this specimen was discovered by accident by Kenny F. Larsen, a geologist working on the BC Rail line near the Sustut River, north of Smithers, in 1971. He noticed something unusual at the bottom of a cliff—a large, pointed claw. Buster was one of the first dinosaurs found in BC and is one of the most complete dinosaur skeletons ever found here.



"Buster", a leptoceratopsid dinosaur from British Columbia. Raven Amos illustration.

Buster is a brand new species of dinosaur, and was given the new scientific name *Ferrisaurus sustutensis*. It means "The Iron Lizard from the Sustut River", after its discovery along the railway line so long ago. *Ferrisaurus* was a member of a group of dinosaurs called Leptoceratopsidae (LEP-toe-SAIR-ah-TOPS-ih-day). These rare plant-eating dinosaurs were relatives of the iconic horned dinosaur *Triceratops*. Leptoceratopsids had big heads, deep jaws and parrot-like beaks, but they lacked the horns and frills of their more famous ceratopsian cousins.

Buster's skeleton includes part of the shoulders, left arm, left leg and right foot. Subtle differences in the shape and size of these bones showed that this skeleton didn't belong to any known species of leptoceratopsid, and led Dr. Arbour to identify it as a species new to science!