

BONE BLOCK: COELOPHYSIS

LEVEL 9th-12th grade

VIDEO CMNH.org/atHome/Ep45

Paleontologists gather information about prehistoric animals by studying fossils. In this Specimen Spotlight episode, learn what has been discovered about a small dinosaur, *Coelophysis bauri*.

1. Paleontologists and geologists divide the Mesozoic Era into three periods. List the three periods from oldest to youngest:

_____, _____, and _____

Circle the time period in which *Coelophysis* lived.

2. At the paleontological site in New Mexico where the Museum's bone block and several other bone blocks were excavated, hundreds of *Coelophysis* skeletons were found jumbled together. The animals died as a result of some type of event. What might that event have been? Why had so many animals been together? Can you think of something similar that occurs in present times? Use evidence and reasoning to support your claim.

3. The *Coelophysis* displayed at the Museum is called a composite skeleton, meaning that this skeleton was created using the remains of more than one *Coelophysis*. The creation of a composite skeleton is a fairly common practice in the field of paleontology and can be interpreted in a variety of ways.

Some composite skeletons are a mix of real fossil bones and scientific casts of fossil specimens. Other composite skeletons, like *Coelophysis*, are created by using the real fossil bones of more than one individual. What makes our *Coelophysis* so special is that it is entirely constructed of real fossil bones! Just think about how many times an entirely intact and complete dinosaur skeleton has been found. Do you know how often this happens? Take some time to explore one of the most complete specimens ever found and learn other interesting facts about the field of paleontology. Visit these websites to find out more. What are some of the most interesting things you discovered? Make a list in the space below and share what you learned with your family.

RESOURCES:

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History

cmnh.org/research-collections/vertebrate-paleontology

The Field Museum

fieldmuseum.org/blog/which-dinosaur-bones-are-real

The Smithsonian's podcast, Sidedoor: Season 4, Episodes 1 & 2

si.edu/sidedoor/ep-1-dinosaur-war

The American Museum of Natural History

amnh.org/dinosaurs/dinosaur-facts

4. Become a paleontologist! Fill in the musculature and add skin and color to the *Coelophysis* skeleton below. Do we know what it was covered with or what color it might have been? Be creative and draw/color your ideas here!

