

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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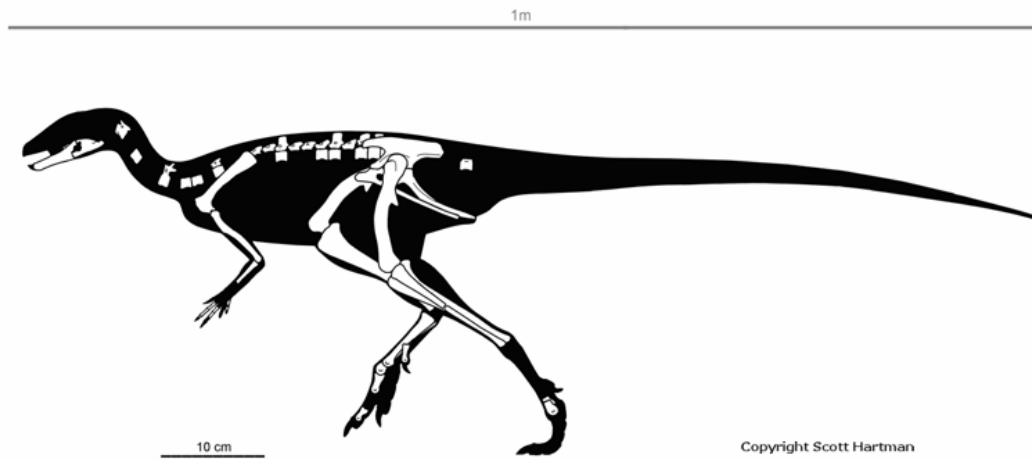
***Eocursor*, a 200 Million year old missing link!**

An expedition led by Dr David Norman, to the Karoo Basin in the Free State area of South Africa, resulted in the discovery of a number of fossils new to science. Of particular interest was a small, partial skeleton of an early dinosaur that was discovered on Ken Stofberg's, Damplaats Farm, near Ladybrand. The specimen was collected and partly prepared in the laboratories of the **Iziko South African Museum, Cape Town** before being shipped to the **Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge**, to be further prepared by Sarah Finney in the Conservation Laboratory of the Sedgwick Museum.

What emerged was the skeleton of one of the earliest ornithischian dinosaurs known to date. It was studied by a team including Dr Richard Butler (a PhD student supervised by Dr Norman and Dr Roger Smith from the South African Museum). The new dinosaur has been named ***Eocursor parvus*** (Little Early Runner) in today's publication of the Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. This little creature was less than 1 metre in length, was lightly built and was capable of running quickly on its hindlegs. At 200 million years old this creature was one of the earliest representatives of the Ornithischia (one of the two major groups of dinosaurs known) and was in a sense a prototype from which evolved the much grander and more impressive and better-known herbivorous animals such as *Iguanodon*, *Triceratops* and *Stegosaurus*.

Despite impressions created by media and films, dinosaurs are rare discoveries, and particularly so at the time of their origin and early diversification. This extremely rare discovery provides scientists with important insights into the origin and early evolution of an extremely important group of animals that rose to dominate the Earth for 150 million years (before the major extinction at the end of the Cretaceous Period 65 Million years ago).

Dr David Norman (Sedgwick Museum Director and Palaeontologist) commented: "This was a fortunate find, I was actually looking for a rather different type of early dinosaur at the time, but just shows how serendipitous fossil discovery can be. As land animals, dinosaur skeletons are naturally rather rare, this is even more so around the time of their evolutionary origin, so it is not only surprising, but delightful to be involved in such important discoveries."



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Note to Editors

1. The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences

Downing Street, Cambridge enquiries: 01223 333456
(www.sedgwickmuseum.org). The Sedgwick has more than one million fossils in its collection; these range from the earliest forms of life, dating back more than 3,000,000,000 years ago, to the remarkable wildlife that roamed the Fens less than 150,000 years ago. Displays include a gallery of minerals and gemstones, the world's largest spider, fossil plants, huge marine reptiles from the Jurassic Period, dinosaurs and Cambridgeshire's very own Hippopotamus.

2. Dr David Norman

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