American Museum of Natural History

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Largest and One of the Most Complete *Stegosaurus* Fossils Ever Found, Known as "Apex," Goes on View Starting Sunday, December 8, at the American Museum of Natural History

Special loan from Kenneth C. Griffin brings 27-foot-long fossil to exhibit in the Museum's Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation and spurs new research program

Full press kit available here

Thought to be the largest and one of the most complete *Stegosaurus* specimens ever found, a 150-million-year-old fossil known as Apex will go on display at the American Museum of Natural History starting Sunday, December 8. The extraordinary specimen, which measures 11.5 feet tall and 27 feet long and is nearly 80 percent complete, will greet visitors just inside the entrance to the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation in the Kenneth C. Griffin Exploration Atrium, as part of a special loan from Kenneth C. Griffin, founder and CEO of Citadel and founder of Griffin Catalyst.

During its stay at the Museum, support from Griffin will also enable Apex to be studied as part of a new research initiative by scientists in the Museum's Division of Paleontology focused on *Stegosaurus* biology, including the unique ornithischian dinosaur's growth and life history.

“We are thrilled to have Apex on view at the Museum and grateful to Ken Griffin for his commitment to sharing this magnificent specimen with the public and for partnering with our Museum to do so,” said Sean M. Decatur, President of the American Museum of Natural History. “Mr. Griffin brings a strong sense of civic responsibility, a deep love of and support for science, and an understanding of the power of museums, including ours, to inspire wonder and spur innovation. This partnership allows Apex to have pride of place at a museum world-renowned for its dinosaur collection and for its longstanding leadership in paleontology and, even more exciting, enables us to pursue specialized *Stegosaurus* research centered around this extraordinary and scientifically important specimen. We hope our millions of visitors are as awe-struck as we are by Apex and look forward to the research breakthroughs ahead.”

Apex was discovered in May 2022 by commercial paleontologist Jason Cooper in the famed Morrison Formation just outside of the town of Dinosaur, Colorado. After the specimen was excavated, prepared, and articulated, it was mounted in a defensive pose, with its multi-spiked tail raised in the air. The specimen is extremely well-preserved, with more than 254 bone elements of approximately 320 preserved. Its missing pieces were filled in with 3D-printed and sculpted components. In addition to its exceptional size and completeness, Apex is one of the few *Stegosaurus* specimens ever found that appears to have lived to an advanced age. The 150-million-year-old fossil was purchased by Griffin at auction from Sotheby’s in July 2024, and shortly thereafter, Griffin announced his intention to loan the specimen to a U.S. institution as part of his commitment to advancing research and increasing access to science and natural history. Griffin has previously provided significant support to the Museum through the new Kenneth C. Griffin Exploration Atrium in the Gilder Center.

“Apex offers a unique window into our planet's distant past, and I’m so pleased to partner with the American Museum of Natural History to showcase it at one of our country’s preeminent scientific institutions. I am grateful that millions of visitors and researchers will now be able to see and learn from this magnificent specimen of the Late Jurassic Period,” said Griffin. “The joy and awe every child feels coloring a *Stegosaurus* with their crayons will now be brought to life for the millions of people who have the opportunity to see this epic dinosaur in person.”

At the Museum, Apex will first go on view in the windowed alcove directly to the right of the entrance to the Gilder Center. Visitors can move around the mounted fossil, appreciating its massive scale from all angles, and the light-filled space also provides unique views to passersby in Theodore Roosevelt Park. Next fall, the specimen will be relocated to the fourth floor, where Apex will anchor a dramatic new entrance to the Museum’s famed fossil halls from the Gilder Center. It is expected to be on view at the Museum for total of four years, after which a cast of Apex will take the fossil’s place.

Stegosaurus, with its distinctive pointy back-plates, is one of the world’s most recognizable dinosaurs. The first stegosaurian dinosaur fossil (*Dacentrurus*) was discovered in 1874 in the United Kingdom, and the group was given its name in 1877 after the discovery of a second specimen (*Stegosaurus armatus*) in Colorado. Since then, the remains of more than 80 individuals have been accessioned by scientific institutions, but there are very few substantially complete *Stegosaurus* skeletons representing a single individual such as Apex. To date, *Stegosaurus* research has focused on anatomical descriptions, leaving key aspects of the dinosaur’s biology unstudied.

“As exciting as is it is to have this dinosaur on display, it is even more exciting to have the opportunity to study it and make important scientific data available for research,” said Roger Benson, the Museum’s Macaulay Curator of Paleontology and curator-in-charge of fossil amphibians, reptiles, and birds and fossil plants. “*Stegosaurus* is one of the top dinosaurs known by the general public, but scientifically, we have much more to learn.”

A new three-year postdoctoral fellowship, overseen by Benson and made possible by Griffin, will investigate *Stegosaurus* growth, life history, and variation, combining data from Apex and existing collections at the Museum and other natural history institutions. Research conducted by the new Kenneth

C. Griffin Postdoctoral Fellow for Paleontology will include: identifying the particular species of the Apex specimen, which is currently unknown; producing the first-ever growth curve for *Stegosaurus*, testing the hypothesis that stegosaurs grew slowly and may have had lower metabolic rates than other dinosaurs; and investigating the skeletal changes *Stegosaurus* underwent as it grew from juvenile to adult.

This work will require taking a small sample from a thigh bone of the specimen, which will become part of the Museum's permanent scientific collection. All resulting 3D digital models, including the internal structures of its skull from new CT scans taken at the Museum, will be made available as a scientific resource for the wider community of researchers.

With support from Griffin, the Museum is also planning a broad slate of educational resources tied to Apex for age groups ranging from early childhood to youth, as well as resources for educators and lifelong learners.

Paleontology at the Museum and Fossil Exhibits

The American Museum of Natural History and the advancement of paleontological research have been inextricably intertwined for well over a century. The Division of Paleontology is home to one of the largest and most diverse collections of its kind in the world, with more than 5.5 million specimens in vertebrate and invertebrate paleontology. Annual fieldwork in some of the richest fossil localities in the world continues today and has led to high-impact discoveries, including the identification of the first dinosaur eggs and early evidence of dinosaur feathers. Through the use of advanced scientific tools including CT scanners, electron microscopes, and high-throughput computing, Museum paleontologists and their research teams advance our understanding of the history of life on Earth (*see backgrounder on Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History*).

The Museum's famed fourth-floor dinosaur halls—the Hall of Saurischian Dinosaurs and the Hall of Ornithischian Dinosaurs—feature about 100 dinosaur specimens, including a nearly complete *Tyrannosaurus rex*, the first *T. rex* ever put on public display; a dinosaur mummy—the fossilized imprint of the carcass of a duck-billed dinosaur that offers a rare glimpse of dinosaur skin; an *Apatosaurus*, collected in the late 1890s, which was the first sauropod dinosaur ever mounted; and the Glen Rose Trackway, a 107-million-year-old series of fossilized dinosaur footprints that captures the steps left by a small bipedal theropod and a large sauropod, the hind feet of which measured 3 feet in length. Nearby, the Museum's Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Orientation Center is home to The Titanosaur, the life-sized cast of a 122-foot-long sauropod dinosaur, *Patagotitan mayorum*, discovered in 2014.

The Museum's permanent *Stegosaurus* exhibit, in the Hall of Ornithischian Dinosaurs, includes a *Stegosaurus stenops* specimen, which, like Apex, is from the Morrison Formation. It was found during the Museum's first major dinosaur excavation in 1901 in Bone Cabin Quarry, Wyoming. Because the specimen was relatively incomplete, it was not mounted until 1932, as a composite of bones from the original specimen along with replicas of fossil bones from more complete finds. This exhibit also includes a set of neck nodules found in 1901 and a cast of an incomplete juvenile *stenops* skeleton from Dinosaur National Monument, Utah, believed to be the smallest *Stegosaurus* fossil ever found.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (AMNH)

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869 with a dual mission of scientific research and science education, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses more than 40 permanent exhibition halls, galleries for temporary exhibitions, the Rose Center for Earth and Space including the Hayden Planetarium, and the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation. The Museum's scientists draw on a world-class permanent collection of more than 30 million specimens and artifacts, some of which are billions of years old, and on one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, the Museum offers two of the only free-standing, degree-granting programs of their kind at any museum in the U.S.:

the Ph.D. program in Comparative Biology and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Earth Science residency program. Visit amnh.org for more information.

ABOUT GRIFFIN CATALYST
Griffin Catalyst is the civic engagement initiative of Citadel founder and CEO Ken Griffin, encompassing his philanthropic and community impact efforts. Tackling the world's greatest challenges in innovative, action-oriented, and evidence-driven ways, Griffin Catalyst is dedicated to expanding opportunity and improving lives across six areas of focus: Education, Science & Medicine, Upward Mobility, Freedom & Democracy, Enterprise & Innovation, and Communities. For more information, visit griffincatalyst.org.

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Apex and its associated scientific research and educational activations are made possible by Kenneth C. Griffin and Griffin Catalyst.

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Image:
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