

# Poster Series Depicts Prehistoric World

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The Winchester Star

What did the giant lizards of the late Cretaceous era look like to their tiny neighbors?

The Claws of Hell Creek poster series shows how this prehistoric world might have looked from a critter's eye view.

The first edition, recently released by the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, features a saurornitholestes — a sickle-clawed dromaeosaur, or at least its lethal-looking feet.

Look more closely at the paleo-art poster and you will see the 2-foot ancestor of the boa constrictor recoiling in the shade as this larger predator stalks by.

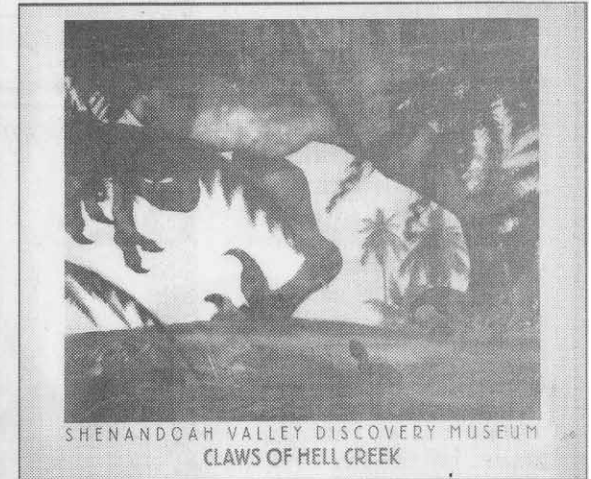
Paleontologist Geb Bennett, and artist Mark Lawson produced the poster series together for the museum on the Loudoun Street Mall.

Bennett, who specializes in the tiniest fossils, said he is also an avid collector of dinosaur art posters, and several artfully-drawn brontosaurus, tyrannosaurus rex and other thunder lizards overlook his workplace in the front of the museum.

But he hasn't seen any like the series he and Lawson created.

"When you do see art on ancient animals, you never do see the little things and from their perspective," Bennett said.

But their remains are far more plentiful, and so provide a lot of data about the critters and their world.



Star Photos by Scott Mason

Geb Bennett (left) and Mark Lawson show the dinosaur poster being sold at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum on the Loudoun Street Mall.

A poster featuring several primitive frogs fleeing the footfall of a Tyrannosaurus Rex will be released in January by the museum with additional posters every three months.

"You can go out and get an entire dinosaur skeleton and you wouldn't get the same amount of data you can collect from all these little guys," Bennett said.

His explorations of the Hell Creek formation in the eastern Montana Badlands have yielded the remains of both the creatures depicted in the first poster.

Lawson, who painted many of the murals in the museum, said he was thrilled when they hired a paleontologist.

"I had done some paleo-art before," Lawson said. "When Geb came on board, I became a fan of his work. I wanted to do a series of posters after his little creatures."

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"To be able to reconstruct an environment from these little fragments of bone is really fascinating," he said.

Lawson composes each image using three-dimensional graphics software, then uses a painting program to model skin tones, landscape details, and the environment.

That way it doesn't end up with a computer-modeled "plastic-ey" feel like you see with Disney's animated "Toy Story," he said.

"Other painters have seen it and said they didn't realize it was done on a computer," Lawson said.

Melanie Mullinax, spokeswoman for the museum, said they will print only 100 of each poster, which cost \$15 each.

At an unveiling ceremony, patrons could purchase posters signed by Lawson and Bennett.

"It's a way for us to promote education and it has the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum name on it at the same time," Mullinax said.

Posters are available at the museum at 54 S. Loudoun Street.

Lawson said he and Bennett have worked together on the posters for just over a year, getting the size of the snake down and perfecting the stance of the dromaeosaur. It then took him about a month of computer time to complete each poster.

Both said they felt privileged to be a part of the project.

"To be able to do this out of a children's museum is pretty unusual," Bennett said.