

Restoration of Anchisaurus / by O.C. Marsh.

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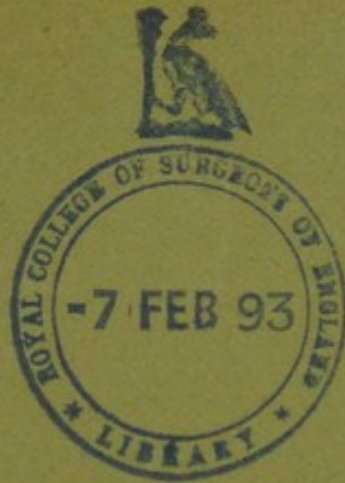
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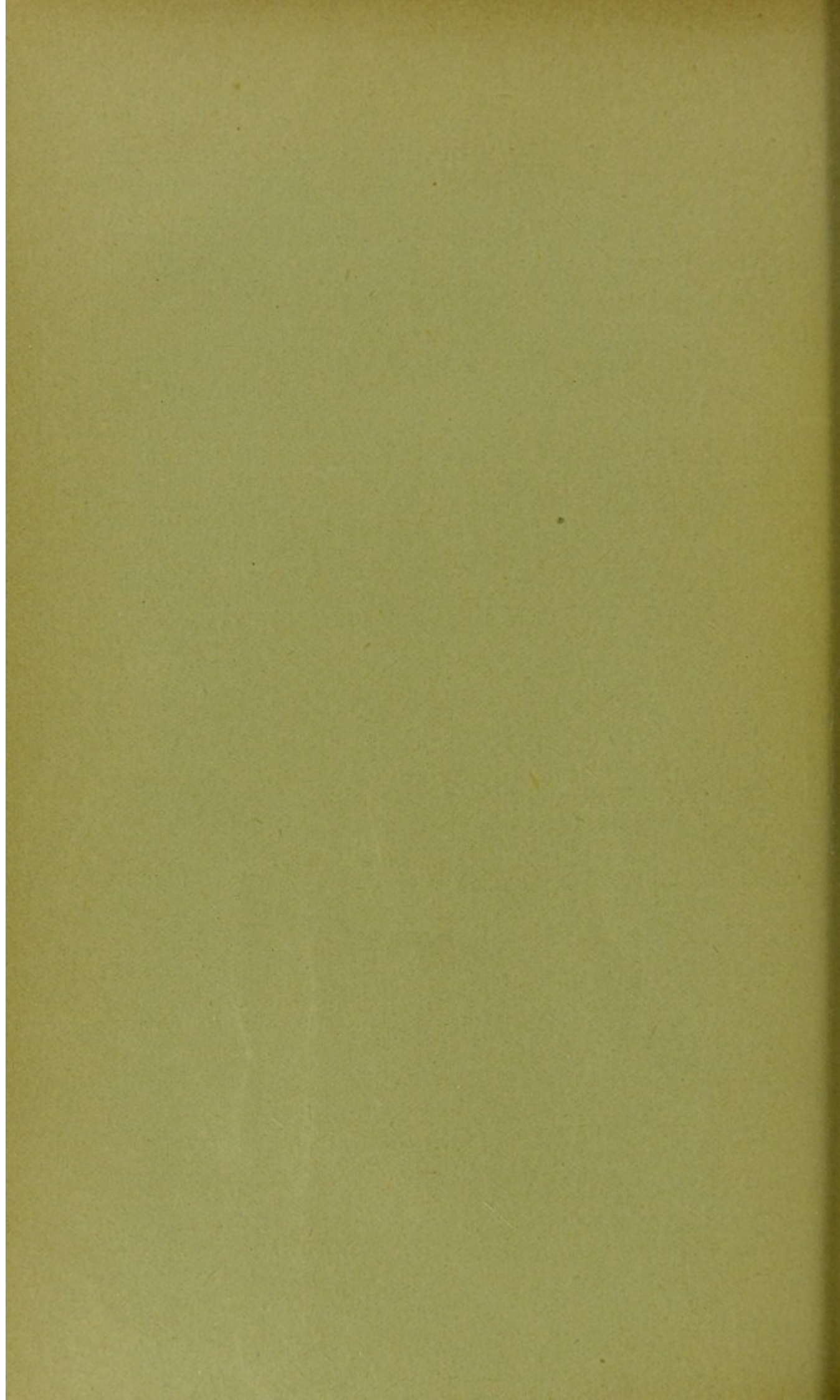


[FROM THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SCIENCE, VOL. XLV, FEBRUARY, 1893.]

RESTORATION OF ANCHISAURUS.

WITH PLATE.

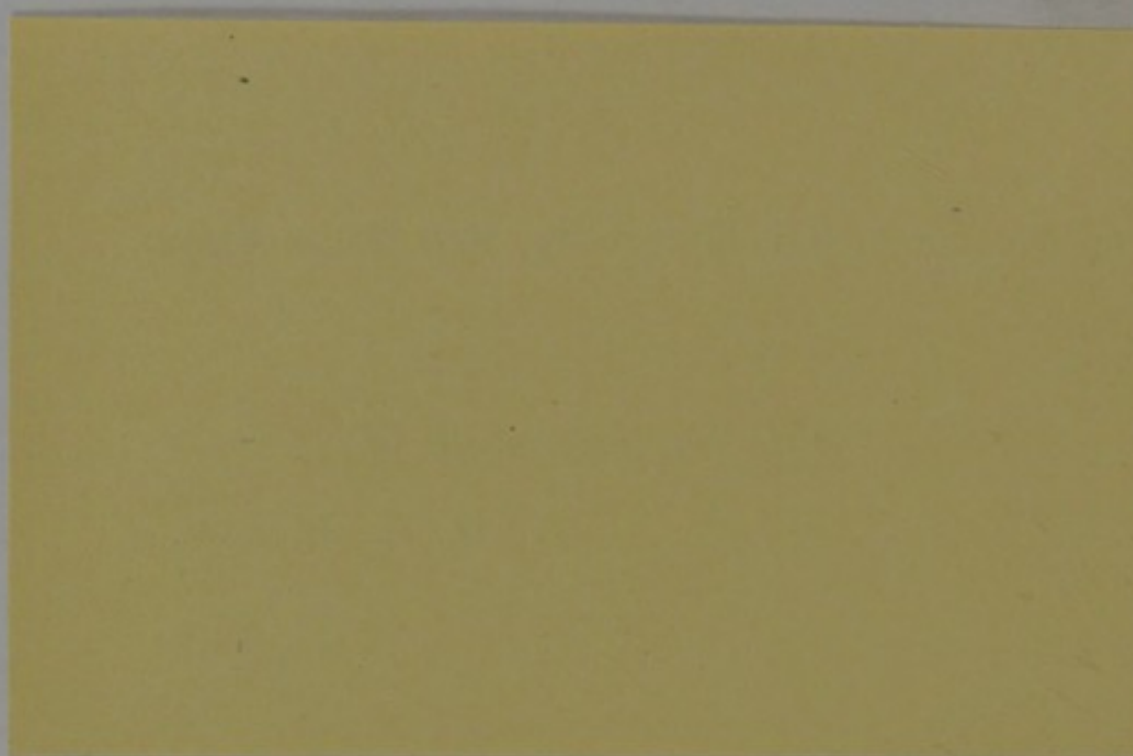
By O. C. MARSH.



Peabody Museum of Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

With the compliments of

O. C. MARSH.





Restoration of Anchisaurus; by O. C. MARSH.
(With Plate VI.)

THE Triassic Dinosaurs now known from the Connecticut river sandstone have been investigated by the writer, and some of the results have already been placed on record in this Journal.* Remains of five individuals have been discovered, sufficiently well preserved to indicate the main characters of the animals to which they pertained. These were all carnivorous forms of moderate size, and the known remains are from essentially the same geological horizon. Many larger forms, probably herbivorous, are indicated by footprints, but no characteristic portions of the skeleton have yet been found.

The genus *Anchisaurus*, one of the oldest known members of the *Theropoda*, is so well represented by parts of four skeletons, two nearly complete, from these deposits, that a restoration of one species can now be made with considerable certainty. This has been attempted, and the result is given, one-twelfth natural size, in the accompanying plate. The animal when alive was about six feet in length.

The skeleton chosen for this restoration is the type specimen of *Anchisaurus colurus*, already described by the writer. This skeleton when discovered was entire, and apparently in the position in which the animal died. Portions of the neck and the tail vertebræ were unfortunately lost before the importance of the specimen was realized, but the skull and nearly all the rest of the skeleton were saved. From these the matrix in great part has been removed, so that the more important characters can be made out with certainty. The parts missing are fortunately preserved in a smaller specimen of an allied species (*Anchisaurus solus*) found at the same locality, and these have been used to complete the outline of the restoration. Portions of two other specimens, nearly allied, and from the same horizon, were also available, and furnished some suggestions of value.

The restoration as shown on Plate VI. indicates that *Anchisaurus colurus* was one of the most slender and delicate dinosaurs yet discovered, being only surpassed in this respect by some of the smaller bird-like forms of the Jurassic. The

* This Journal, vol. xxxvii, p. 331, April, 1889; vol. xlii, p. 267, September, 1891; and vol. xliii, p. 543, June, 1892.

position chosen is one that must have been habitually assumed by the animal during life, but the comparatively large fore limbs suggest the possibility of motion on all four feet. The compressed terminal digits of the fore feet, however, must have been covered by very sharp claws, which were used mainly for prehension, and not for locomotion.

The small head and bird-like neck are especially noticeable. The ribs of the neck and trunk are very slender. The tail apparently differed from that of any other dinosaur hitherto described, as it was evidently quite slender and flexible. The short neural spines and the diminutive chevrons directed backward indicate a tail not compressed, but nearly round, and one usually carried free from the ground.

The present restoration will tend to clear up one point long in doubt. The so-called "bird-tracks" of the Connecticut river sandstone have been a fruitful subject of discussion for half a century or more. That some of these were not made by birds has already been clearly demonstrated by finding with them the impressions of fore feet, similar to those made by reptiles. Although no osseous remains were found with them, others have been regarded as footprints of birds, because it was supposed that birds alone could make such series of bipedal, three-toed tracks and leave no impression of a tail.

It is now evident, however, that a dinosaurian reptile like *Anchisaurus* and its near allies must have made footprints very similar to, if not identical with, the "bird tracks" of this horizon. On a firm but moist beach, only three-toed impressions would have been left by the hind feet, and the tail could have been kept free from the ground. On a soft, muddy shore, the claw of the first digit of the hind foot would have left its mark, and perhaps the tail also would have touched the ground. Such additional impressions the writer has observed in various series of typical "bird tracks" in the Connecticut sandstone, and all of them were probably made by dinosaurian reptiles. No tracks of true birds are known in this horizon.

The genus *Ammosaurus*, represented by remains of larger size from the same strata, was a typical carnivorous dinosaur, and apparently a near ally of *Anchisaurus*. So far as at present known, the footprints of the two reptiles would be very similar, differing mainly in size.

The only other reptile known from the Connecticut sandstone by any part of the skeleton is a large *Belodon* from a lower horizon. This crocodilian may be called *Belodon validus*, and will be described by the writer later.

Restoration of ANCHISAUURUS COLURUS, Marsh. One-twelfth natural size.





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