

Barosaurus and *Allosaurus*

This event *might* have happened 140 million years ago in Wyoming or Utah. A mother *Barosaurus* rears up on her hind legs to protect her baby from an attacking *Allosaurus*.

As *Allosaurus* sprints around the mother, she attempts to counter by dropping on top of the predator and crushing it. The mount depicts the instant the mother begins to descend, with her eye on the *Allosaurus* and her body twisting to keep pace with its advance. Meanwhile, the baby steps nimbly over the mother's tail, using her enormous body as a shield.

You decide the outcome.

Did This Event Really Happen?

In truth, no one knows for sure. Scientists disagree about many aspects of this scene.

Fossil bones are our only real evidence of what these extinct animals were like. Although the fossils tell us a lot about the size and shape of these animals, we can only guess about whether they could have behaved as shown in this scene.

The Evidence

The diagram on the right shows how the bones of the adult *Barosaurus* (colored red) were found jumbled together with the bones of other animals at a site called Howe Quarry in western Wyoming.

By fitting the bones together, scientists can learn about the general size and shape of the animals. Fossil footprints found at other sites provide further evidence that dinosaurs like *Barosaurus* could walk on all four legs and that dinosaurs like *Allosaurus* walked on their two hind legs. However, many other intriguing questions remain controversial or unanswered.

Some Guesses

The illustration on the left represents one image of what the scene might have looked like if it did occur. Several aspects of the mount and illustration are either difficult or impossible to interpret with certainty from the fossil evidence.

For example, could *Barosaurus* rear up on its hind legs? Some scientific studies suggest that it could; however, others imply it could not. Would *Allosaurus* have hunted individually or in packs? Scientists disagree; in fact, many scientists feel that large carnivorous dinosaurs might have been scavengers rather than active predators. Were dinosaurs brightly or dully colored? Again, the fossils provide no direct evidence, so different scientists and artists have different opinions.

Questions and Answers

For centuries, fossils of dinosaurs and other extinct animals have stimulated our curiosity and imagination. By studying these fossils we have learned a lot about these long extinct beasts; however, many mysteries remain. Come to the exhibitions on the fourth floor and discover more about what we do and do not know.

Legend for Schematic of *Barosaurus* Information Center

1. Text block describing action.
2. Gurche illustration.
3. Text block concerning what we do and do not know.
4. Quarry map showing how *Barosaurus* bones were arranged when found.
5. Concluding comment with invitation to visit 4th floor.

