

# MYSTERY OF THE TERRIBLE HAND

## Did you Know?

Today, China and Argentina are “hot spots” for important dinosaur discoveries.

**Name:** *Deinocheirus*

**Lived when:** 70 million years ago

**Discovered where:** Mongolia

*Whose arms are these?* Paleontologists have **sought** an answer to this question for almost forty years.

In the 1960s, paleontologists unearthed a pair of giant arms in Mongolia. The **length** of each, when fully **extended**, was 2.4 meters (eight feet). The claws were 26 centimeters (ten inches) long. Paleontologists called the animal *Deinocheirus* (meaning “**terrible** hand”).

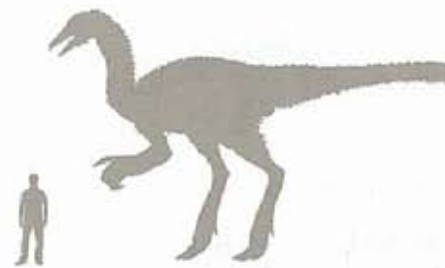
So what did this animal look like? Paleontologists aren’t sure. Many times, scientists have **examined** the area where they found the arms. But since the original discovery, they have unearthed only a few other bones of this dinosaur.

Despite this, scientists have some ideas about *Deinocheirus*’s **appearance**. Physically, this animal’s arms and hands are similar to *ornithomimids*—a type of dinosaur that looked like a modern-day ostrich<sup>1</sup> and used its arms for catching food. But when paleontologists use the size of *Deinocheirus*’s arms to try to **estimate** the size of its body, it seems to have been a huge animal—almost 12 meters (40 feet) long. This is almost as big as a *T. rex*!

Other scientists have a different **opinion**. They think *Deinocheirus* was a smaller dinosaur with extremely long arms. But why would a little animal need limbs<sup>2</sup> so long? To climb trees or to hunt for food, perhaps? “The body is a **mystery**,” says Thomas Holtz, a paleontologist at the University of Maryland in the U.S. “It might not be an ornithomimid at all. But then what is it?” Until paleontologists find new fossil evidence, this question remains **unanswered**.



*Deinocheirus: the body is a mystery.*



▲ *Was Deinocheirus a huge animal?*

<sup>1</sup> An **ostrich** is a very large bird that cannot fly.

<sup>2</sup> Your **limbs** are your arms and legs.