



Dino Tracks in Trouble

Sometimes the finest treasures lie in the dingiest holes. That's unfortunately the case with the Texas Memorial Museum's legendary set of prehistoric dinosaur tracks found in 1939 in Dinosaur Valley State Park near Glen Rose. For 60-some years now, they have been deteriorating inside a tiny building just north of the museum's main entrance.

For a long while no one knew that the 15' x 30' "trackway," 130 million-year-old footprints of what scientists speculate were two dinosaurs fighting, was in trouble, until in 1988 sculptor Pam Maceo went to make a plaster cast of the tracks and saw that the limestone was disintegrating. Five years later, a report suggested upgrading the accommodations. Fifteen years after that report, the tracks remain in the same house and are in even worse shape.

Persistent humidity, frequent critter break-ins, and a lack of temperature control inside the house are contributing to the tracks' deterioration. Last July the University solicited bids from stone conservators to move the 30-ton slab, and most put the cost at around \$500,000.

The museum is hoping to have the tracks settled into their new location on the museum's first floor within the next three years, but as of now no money has been allocated to the project. Museum director Ed Theriot (shown) expects that with UT's budget woes the cash will have to come from private donors.

—Tim Taliaferro