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## Dinosaur mummy reveals link to birds

By Kathy Blumenstock

The Washington Post

September 12, 2008

He lived 77 million years ago, and now Leonardo, an immense creature preserved by time and elements, stars in his own TV special. The program chronicles the story of the first dinosaur mummy unearthed with an intact digestive tract: the fossilized *Brachylophosaurus* was a duck-billed, four-legged plant eater.

Scientists estimate the male, 20-foot-long juvenile dinosaur was only 3 or 4 years old. He was discovered by amateur paleontologists near Malta, Mont., in July 2000.

Twenty diggers spent more than nine weeks just removing the cliff face above the fossil, whose body was covered 90 percent by skin.

The massive find both excited and puzzled scientists. The dinosaur's identifiable stomach contents are a rarity, because the preservation of plant matter demands specific conditions.

"No one knows why the bacteria didn't eat into him," said Robert Bakker, part of the team that deconstructed Leonardo.

Discovery Channel's cameras follow the journey of Leonardo—whose name was inspired by an old graffiti message inscribed near where he was found—as scientists transport the giant carcass from Montana to the Johnson Space Center in Houston for detailed inspection.

The program also spotlights a unique physical feature on Leonardo's neck. The crop, a pocketlike spot that modern birds use to help digestion, provides temporary storage for chewed food, Bakker said.

The crop is significant, Bakker added, because its presence indicates dinosaurs may have been more similar to birds than to reptiles.

*"Secrets of the Dinosaur Mummy" airs at 8 p.m. Sunday on Discovery Channel.*

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