Dinosaur Theft Alleged

A husband-and-wife team of fossil exhibit preparators has been charged with the 1991 theft of a 150-million-year-old rare dinosaur skeleton. On 4 September, federal and Utah state attorneys charged Barry James and April Rhodes-James of Sunbury, Pennsylvania, with buying and then selling an *Allosaurus* that was illegally collected from federal land in Utah.

Only a dozen relatively complete skeletons are known of *Allosaurus*, a 10- to 14-meter-long predator from the late Jurassic. The skeleton in question has about 85% of its bones, says Laurie Bryant, a paleontologist with the Bureau of Land Management in Salt Lake City.

***Allosaurus* skull at center of case.**

Rhodes-James and James run a company, Prehistoric Journeys, and say they have assembled more than 100 skeletons of extinct creatures, some of which have been placed in major museums. According to the charges, James went to Utah in 1991 to meet three men who had offered to sell him the *Allosaurus*. He allegedly paid the men about $90,500 to dig up the fossil. If caught, James allegedly told one, they would only risk "a slap on the wrist."

James may face more than that. He could be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison if convicted of state charges of theft by receiving stolen property and violating the cultural antiquities act. The U.S. Attorney's office is seeking $2.1 million in damages from the couple for the alleged theft and sale of the fossil for $400,000 to a Japanese buyer. "We don't anticipate getting [the skeleton] back," says Melodie Rydalch, a spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's office.

James denies the charges. He maintains he never bought the bones, only prepared them and found a buyer. The allosaur bones, he says, came from many individuals, not a single skeleton, and were excavated from private land in the late 1800s. "We're totally innocent," says James, who has been summoned to appear in court in Utah next month.

Takeda Awards Spread Wealth

The first winners of one of the newest and—at a cool 100 million yen ($830,000)—richest science prizes are now known. The Takeda Foundation, endowed by Japanese electronics tycoon Ikuo Takeda, named seven "techno-entrepreneurs" as recipients.

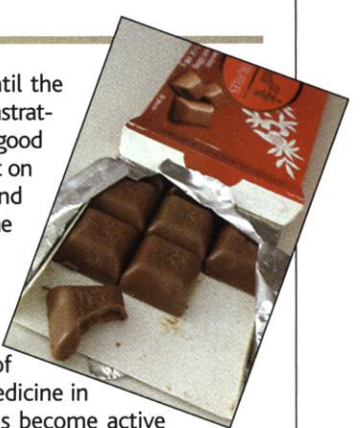
Michael Hunkapiller of Applied Biosystems in Foster City, California, and J. Craig Venter of Celera Genomics in Rockville, Maryland, will split the life sciences award. Friedrich Schmidt-Bleek of the Factor 10 Institute in Carnoules, France, and Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker of the Wuppertal Institute in Wuppertal, Germany, will share the environmental technology award. The award for information and electronics went to a trio of scientists: Ken Sakamura of the University of Tokyo, Richard Stallman of the Free Software Foundation in Boston, and Linus Torvalds of Transmeta Corp. in Santa Clara, California.

The winners will receive their awards in a 4 December Tokyo ceremony.

Name That Telescope

NASA's newest contest is its hottest yet. Starting this month, the space agency is inviting the public to nominate new monikers for the Space Infrared Telescope Facility (SIRTF), which will examine the heat waves produced by heavenly bodies. The winner will receive a trip to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The telescope is one of several NASA projects to be named in public contests. In 1998 the space agency renamed its Advanced X-ray Astrophysics Facility "Chandra" in honor of Indian astronomer Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar after an open competition. NASA named the penetrator probes on its Mars Polar Lander "Scott" and "Amundsen" after a 1999 contest.

The Brain On Chocolate



By forcing people to eat chocolate until the point of disgust, researchers have demonstrated what happens to the brain when a good stimulus turns bad. The results shed light on the neurological basis of addictions and eating disorders, which seem to affect the same brain circuitry.

"Chocolate is the number one craved food, so this is sort of an in-house model of addiction," says cognitive neuroscientist Dana Small of Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago. To look at what brain regions become active when people eat chocolate, Small and colleagues fed chocolate to nine self-proclaimed chocoholics and measured blood flow in the brain using positron emission tomography. After each feeding, the subjects were asked whether the sweets tasted good and whether they wanted more.

In the September issue of *Brain*, the researchers report that two separate motivational systems involving the brain's limbic system—which processes emotion—came into play. When they wanted more chocolate, brain regions implicated in craving, such as the midbrain, lit up in the images. These areas are also activated when people take cocaine, says Small. But when they were eating chocolate even though they didn't really want to, the prefrontal region was activated. The team believes that the area is normally involved in making the decision to stop eating. Separately, different parts of the orbitofrontal cortex—a region involved in balancing motivation—were activated depending on how the subjects found the chocolate.

The study makes a "major contribution" to efforts to map the motivation brain circuitry because it used a constant stimulus, even as the sensation switched from pleasure to disgust, says neurobiologist Peter Shizgal of Concordia University in Montreal, Canada.

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