

Features

Students honor the stegosaurus

Colorado may receive state fossil

United Press International
DENVER — The stegosaurus — an armored dinosaur 20 feet long with a brain the size of a walnut — may be in line for a bit of posthumous honor from the state of Colorado.

State Sen. Polly Baca Barragan introduced a bill in the Colorado General Assembly Tuesday to declare the stegosaurus the official state fossil.

Barragan said she thinks it's time the state had an official fossil. It already has a state flower (the columbine), state bird (lark bunting), state animal (bighorn sheep), and state tree (Colorado blue spruce). So why not a state fossil?

The Democratic legislator said

the idea was first suggested by her last March in a letter written by the fourth grade class of teacher Ruth Sawdo at McElwain Grade School in Thornton after they made a study of dinosaurs.

"We are not sure if we even have a state fossil and we would like your help with this as we think Colorado is richly endowed with fossils and maybe this is something our class could pursue," the students wrote.

Barragan said it was too late in 1980 to draft such legislation, but said she had a bill pre-filed for 1981 — even before her daughter, Monica, 9, joined the class this past fall. The children initially considered

recommending a supersaurus, but dropped that idea after Dr. James A. Jensen of the Earth Sciences Preparation Laboratory at Brigham Young University told them scientists had not found enough of the creature to mount and did not really know what it looked like.

The youngsters then decided to recommend the stegosaurus, a creature whose remains were first discovered in Colorado at the Morrison Quarry near Golden in 1877. Five skeletons have since been discovered in the state, including one dug up by Canon City High School students in Garden Park near Canon City.

Scientists said the stegosaurus

was 20 feet or more in length, covered with horn and had a long tail with four spikes. Despite its massive size, it had a tiny brain only the size of a walnut.

Barragan admits she really doesn't have a favorite among the dinosaurs, but was willing to abide by whatever the students wanted. She said her daughter personally favored the diplodocus, a plant-eating dinosaur.

"They're going to have to answer the questions," Barragan said, laughing. "I don't know anything about the stegosaurus. I told them if they really want this, they should get a campaign going and contact other schools to join the effort."

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Only dying will be given artificial heart

United Press International
SALT LAKE CITY — The University of Utah review committee that approved an artificial heart for human implantation says the first recipient must be a patient who would die without it, but researchers want the subject to have a good chance for a normal life.

After eight months of consideration, the 13-member Review Board for Research with Human Subjects gave its approval Tuesday to a university research team's request to implant their polyurethane heart in a human.

Dr. Ernst Eichwald, the board chairman, said the Food and Drug Administration must now approve the device, which already has been successfully tested in animals. The operation was expected in about 30 days.

Eichwald said the doctors agreed the first patient would be someone undergoing cardiac surgery whose natural heart could not be restarted by any means. The patient would be taken off the heart-lung bypass

machine and the artificial organ implanted.

"There would be no danger to the patient's life with the implant because he would die without it," said Eichwald, a university pathologist. "There is no risk because this is the only possibility this patient would have."

But cardiac surgeon William DeVries, head of the operation team, says they are not considering the surgery a last ditch means of prolonging the recipient's life.

"My hope is that the patient can live a suitable, acceptable lifestyle," DeVries said. "But we can't say how long he will live. It's hard to put a time value on it."

DeVries has already placed the heart in cadavers and found it maintained acceptable blood pressure and flow. He also has implanted the heart in dozens of calves and sheep. "They had a mean survival period of three months. But we hope to do better in humans," said the surgeon.

The first human recipient would be a "high-risk" person facing cardiac

surgery who is otherwise in good health. The subject must be between 17 and 60, DeVries said.

The patient also must be willing to live tethered to an external air pump which will drive the heart. Tubes from the electrically driven pump will enter the recipient's chest.

And the patient also must have some financial resources. The heart and power systems each cost about \$5,000, and the 10-day hospital stay will run about \$4,000. Then, modifications to the person's home would be about \$30,000.

Artificial hearts have been tested on humans at least twice before. A patient of Texas surgeon Denton Cooley 10 years ago survived for nearly three days. Another patient lived eight hours in an experiment in Argentina last year.

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Christmas trees recycled at beach

United Press International
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND — Withered Christmas trees that brought holiday cheer a month ago are being used to rebuild sand dunes along hurricane-scarred South Padre Island.

High winds and storm surges flattened the dunes and cut passes deep into the island when Hurricane Allen hit last August. Cameron County officials said the trees, staked down and tied together with twine, will anchor the blowing sand and start the dunes building again.

"When the wind hits the barrier we provide, it causes the sand to drop out and build up. When the wind blows, the sand bounces along the ground and falls out at the base of the trees and builds a small mound," Country Marine Agent Jack Rickner said Tuesday.

"After we have a small mound, we will be able to transplant dune grass. This will stabilize the mound by holding the sand in place," he said.

The entire project cost the county \$2.52 for the twine. "It's inexpensive," Rickner said, "because what do you do with old Christmas trees but burn them?"

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