

## Diggin' up bones

Dinosaur exhibit great for dates, family entertainment

By ERIC AIKIN & KELLY PREISER

**The Battalion**

From bones to butterflies, there is a lot to see in the Bryan-College Station area many residents may not be aware of. The Brazos Valley Museum of Natural history offers these kinds of different things for visitors to enjoy.

"It's a little gem of a museum," said Dr. Thomas Lynch, executive director of the museum and an adjunct professor at Texas A&M. "Most college students are unaware of it, but it's a wonderful place to take dates or parents when they are visiting. It offers a lot to do that you can't do on campus."

Nivia Maldonado, operations manager of the museum, said she agreed that the museum is a great date place.

"It's different than the usual dinner and a movie," she said. The museum is featuring an exhibit titled T-rex: King of the Dinosaurs. Maldonado said the exhibit is exciting for

the museum because it offers something different than the other exhibits.

"We don't have access to bones in our normal exhibit," Maldonado said. "Guests implied they were interested [in seeing a dinosaur exhibit], so we are glad to have one here."

Lynch said he believes the Tyrannosaurus rex exhibit has been successful due to people's interest in things unknown to them, such as the dinosaurs.

"We all go through the stage where we are captivated by dinosaurs," he said. "This exhibit focuses on the most captivating, most exciting of those: the T-rex."

Lynch said it is rare for a whole skeleton to be found together. He said bones of different animals are usually found together and they are often too fragile to transport. Many museums use casts, models or replicas that look just like the real bones.

These models can be seen at the Tyrannosaurus rex exhibit, although the museum does have real tyrannosaurus rex teeth and a real Tyrannosaurus rex vertebra.

Lynch said that the exhibit has mainly attracted families, but he has seen a lot of "happy" college students come through. He said the exhibit has educational value also.

"While many museums offer noisy dinosaur robots, our exhibits are more educational," he said. "If someone reads their way through this exhibit, they will know more about dinosaurs than they came in knowing."

One part of the exhibit allows visitors to look through binoculars and see what a dinosaur might have seen.

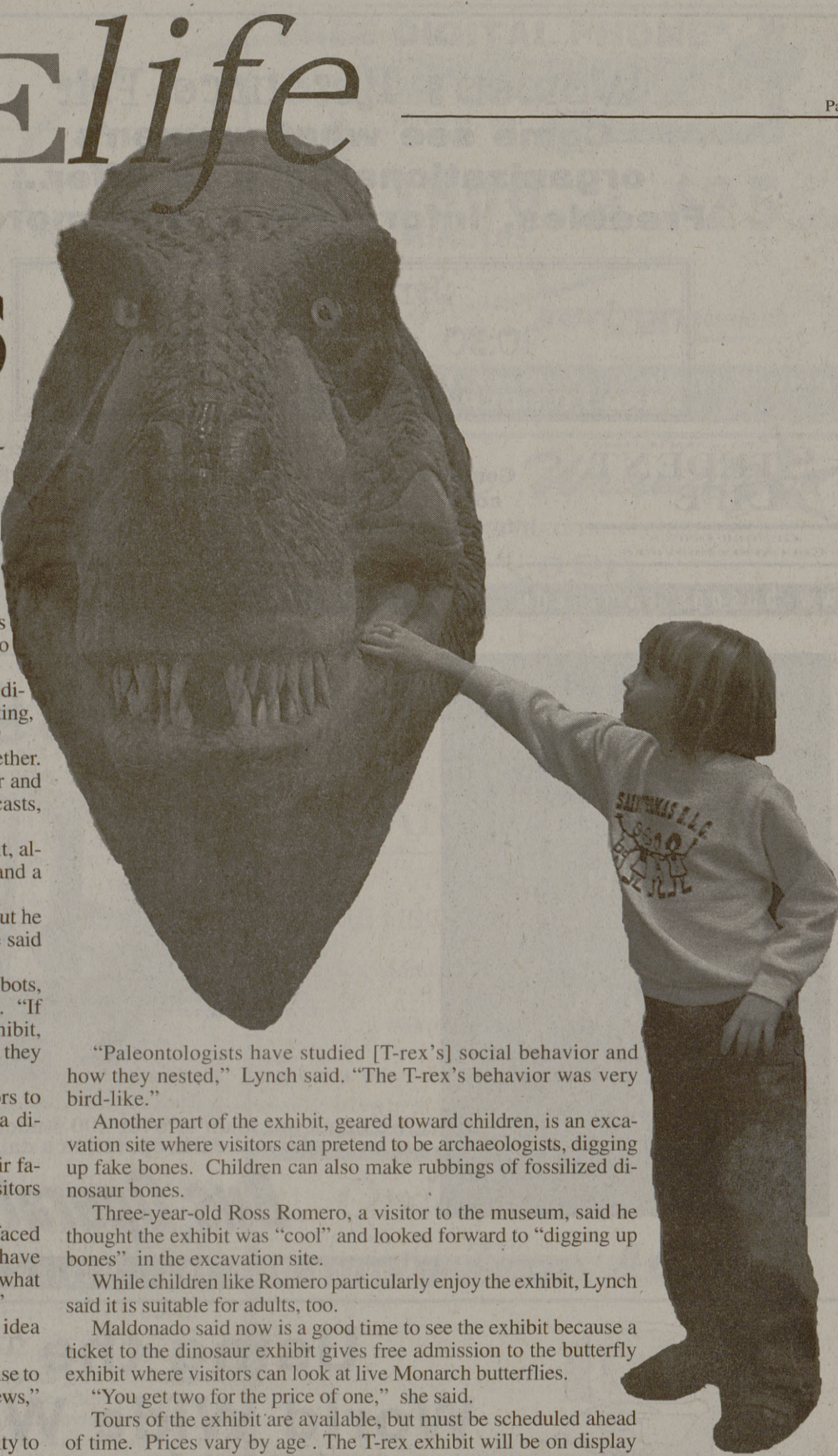
Maldonado and Lynch said this is their favorite part of the exhibit, and Lynch said visitors spend the most time at this section.

"The binoculars show you what a predator with its eyes faced forward like the T-rex might see," Lynch said. "Predators have binocular vision like cats. The other pair of binoculars shows what herbivorous animals with their eyes off to the side would see."

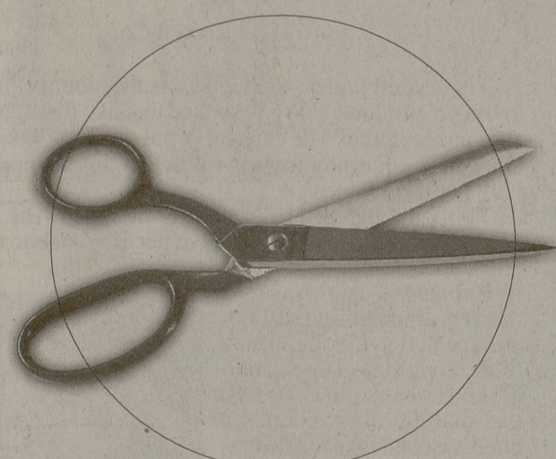
Lynch said one idea brought to life in the exhibit is the idea that birds may have descended from dinosaurs.

"Quite frankly, the view that one of the dinosaurs gave rise to birds is becoming increasingly more accepted than earlier views," said Dr. Gentry Steele, an anthropology professor at A&M.

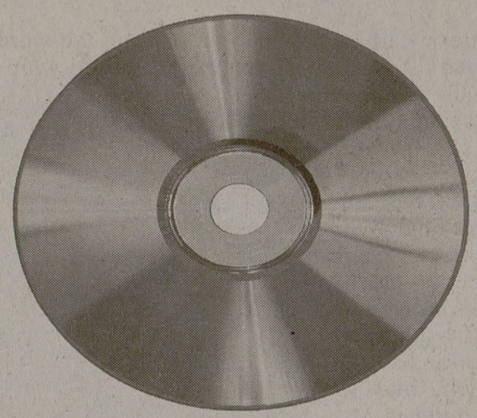
Lynch said the T-rex display promises visitors an opportunity to "explore the similarities between T-rex and living birds."



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