

Tyrannosaurus Rex faced teenage growth spurt

Evidence shows T. Rex's 'mammal-like rapid growth' was not followed by 'mammal-like longevity'

MALCOLM RITTER
AP SCIENCE WRITER

NEW YORK — Think your teenager is growing fast? A new study says Tyrannosaurus Rex launched into an explosive growth spurt in its teen years, packing on an average of nearly 5 pounds a day.

That spurt, from ages 14 to 18, let T. Rex pick up most of its eventual adult weight of around 6 tons, the research says. It stopped growing around age 20 and apparently died by age 30, researchers estimated.

T. Rex was "the James Dean of

dinosaurs — it lived fast and died young," said Gregory Erickson of Florida State University, one of the scientists presenting a study of the reptile's growth pattern in Thursday's issue of the journal *Nature*.

In contrast, he said, while an African elephant's growth reaches a plateau at around the same age and weight, that animal tends to live past age 50.

Scientists have long wondered how the huge dinosaurs got so big. Did they grow slowly for a long time, or very quickly for a shorter period? Or was it a combination? The question must be studied separately for various kinds of dinosaurs, experts said.

T. Rex was one of the largest meat-eaters ever to walk the land when it died out some 65 million years ago. At an elephant-like 6 tons, it stretched about 40 feet to 45 feet long and

measured about 13 feet tall at the hip. The adult skull alone was 5 feet long, with teeth up to a foot long.

"T. Rex is one of the dinosaurs that could eat a human being in probably two bites," said Thomas Holtz Jr. of the University of Maryland. "One bite would take off the top, and the next bite would take off the hips and legs."

Holtz, who didn't participate in the new study, called it important and said it could help answer other questions about T. Rex. For example, he said, it looks like the creature got so big after age 12 that it might not have been able to run as fast as before. So maybe it stopped running after prey and turned more to either scavenging or ambushing its meals, he said.

The research is consistent with the hypothesis that younger T. Rexes often separated a victim from its herd

so "the big bruiser parent could take it down," Holtz said.

It's not surprising that T. Rex showed an explosive growth period in adolescence, because that pattern had been detected in other kinds of dinosaurs, Holtz said. But the estimated lifetime of a T. Rex is surprisingly brief, because it shows the mammal-like rapid growth wasn't followed by a mammal-like longevity, he said.

Erickson agreed that the growth-pattern work opens the door to studying many other things about T. Rexes, although he said it doesn't settle the old question of whether it was primarily a predator or a scavenger.

Erickson and colleagues established the growth pattern by analyzing more than 60 bones from 20 specimens of T. Rex and three of its smaller evolutionary cousins. They deduced the

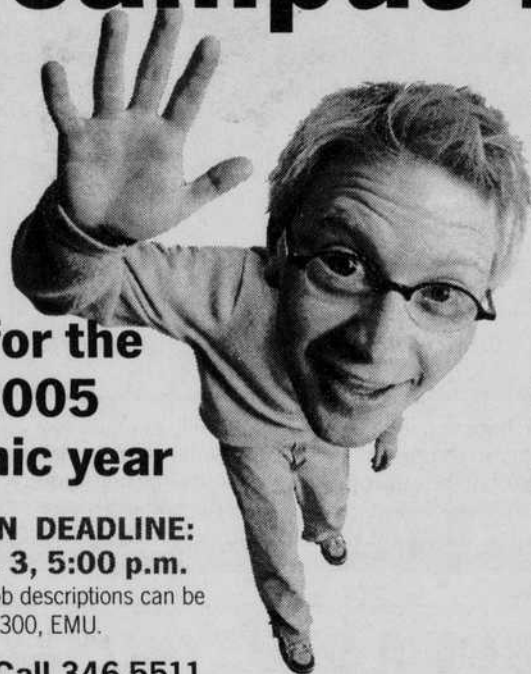
animals' ages at death — which ranged from 2 to 28 years — by studying growth lines, somewhat like counting the rings in a tree trunk. They estimated the animals' weights from the circumference of the thigh bone.

One specimen in the study was Sue, the T. Rex skeleton on display at Chicago's Field Museum. Erickson said the bones showed Sue stopped growing around 18 to 20 years of age and lived to about age 28. The skeleton, which is the largest known for T. Rex, showed much evidence of disease and broken bones, he said.

"This animal was a train wreck at the time it died," Erickson said. "I can't imagine these animals could live much longer."

Malcolm Ritter is a science writer for the Associated Press.

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Republican campaign rewards volunteers

Tickets to Bush's Portland event on Friday will be given to Bush-Cheney volunteers

SARAH LINN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PORTLAND — When John Kerry rolls into Portland on Friday, anyone who wants to hear the Democratic presidential hopeful can head to Waterfront Park.

But those hoping to listen to President Bush on the same day in Portland will probably have to volunteer to work phone banks for the Republican campaign.

Dawn Phillips, spokeswoman for the Oregon Republican Party, said providing access to the Bush appearance is a way to reward "the volunteers who have been working so hard this summer."

Tim Trickey, political director at the Multnomah County Republican Party office in Portland, said party

offices have received hundreds of calls from people hoping to attend Friday's "town hall"-style meeting with the president.

"Every potential Republican supporter would most likely want to do some work, too," Trickey said. "We're just trying to build our volunteer base."

Trickey said the Bush-Cheney campaign will decide who attends the event in addition to the volunteers.

Meanwhile, Kerry campaign officials say Friday's rally at Waterfront Park is open to the public.

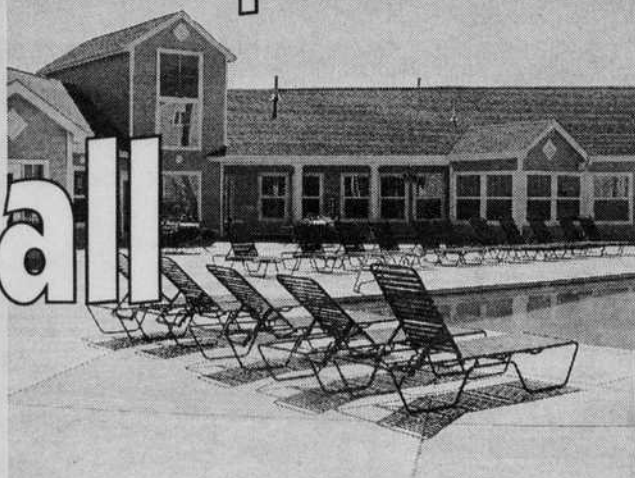
Lisa Sohn, Oregon spokeswoman for the Kerry-Edwards campaign, said the rally marks the culmination of Kerry's two-week "Believe in America" tour across the country.

"Of course we want to make the finale a big event that everyone could come to," she said.

Sarah Linn is a writer for the Associated Press.

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