

The 7th International Palaeontological Congress



Origins: Triassic and Early Jurassic dinosaurs

During the Mesozoic Era, non-avian dinosaurs were the most abundant and species-rich terrestrial vertebrates. They achieved a global distribution, occupied a range of ecological niches and exhibited numerous complex behaviours. Although there have been significant advances in our understanding of their evolution and palaeobiology, not least the inclusion of birds in the dinosaur radiation, work on dinosaur origins, and the factors leading to dinosaur success, have lagged behind other work on the clade. This is due, in part, to historical circumstances with most research driven by palaeontologists in the global North, where early dinosaur localities are relatively rare. In addition, until recently, most of the material that was available for study was poorly preserved and fragmentary.

However, work on early dinosaurs is now undergoing a renaissance. This has been driven primarily by discoveries of exceptional Late Triassic and Early Jurassic dinosaur faunas in the global South, primarily in Argentina, Brazil, and South Africa, with other significant finds being made in India, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere. Many of these same countries, as well as Tanzania and Zambia, have also been producing new material of dinosaur 'precursors' that show how dinosaurs began to acquire their most distinctive anatomical features. All of these new localities are also providing critical information on the faunal and palaeoenvironmental contexts of dinosaur origins. This, in concert with ongoing work on established localities in the global North, and the application of rigorous, robust, and quantitative analyses to phylogenetic and biological questions, is starting to shed much needed light on these issues. As IPC 2026 is to be held in Cape Town, in the heart of Gondwana, it seems appropriate to have a symposium that explores these questions, given the major advances in dinosaur studies that have taken place thanks to recent fieldwork in southern Africa, and the proximity to some of the world's best collections of early dinosaur fossils (in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and Bulawayo).

We propose to bring together a group of the leading specialists currently engaged in work on early dinosaurs, from all career stages and from all around the world. In addition to presenting a diverse set of presentations we also hope to produce a volume arising from the symposium that will act as a benchmark for future work in the area. We would be open to accepting more presentations. It is hoped that this symposium will be of general interest to the attendees of IPC and will also provide an outstanding opportunity for the early dinosaur research community to come together, exchange information, and set out a shared research agenda for the future.

Conveners:

- Jonah N. Choiniere (Jonah.Choiniere@wits.ac.za)
- Paul M. Barrett (p.barrett@nhm.ac.uk)

If you are interested in this symposium, please contact the conveners.