

FOSSIL FRANKENSTEINS: RESURRECTING OLD DATA

Lyndon Murray • Stout Research Center, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
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Paleontologists rely heavily on information published in books, journals, government reports, on websites, and other sources in order to do their jobs. A large part of paleontological work includes comparing one's own research data with those data published by other paleontologists, geologists, and other scientists. Errors occur in publication, as typographic mistakes, flawed hypotheses, inaccurate measurements, poor analyses, etc. Through time and progressive research most errors are corrected and the accurate information is eventually published in new articles or books. However, all previous publications (which still contain the original errors) are still available and paleontological researchers may be unaware of the errors or of subsequently published corrections. Those unrecognized errors may become incorporated into newly published analyses, thus resurrecting old and inaccurate data, creating a cascading effect of inaccuracy.

Lyndon Murray has been the District Paleontologist of the Stout Research Center at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park since March, 2011. From 2003 to 2011 he was the collection manager of the Vertebrate Paleontology Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin, housing over 120,000 catalogued fossil specimens. From 2000 to August 2003 he managed the Vertebrate Paleontology Division at Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History. From 1996 to 1998 he worked as collections manager of paleontology for the San Bernardino County Museum, also managing the fossil collections at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (where he now works) from 1994 to 1997.

He received a double BA degree in bioengineering from the Department of Applied Mechanics and Engineering Science and philosophy from the Department of Philosophy at the University of California at San Diego's Revelle College in 1975 and an MS in Quaternary Studies from Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff in 1992. He received his PhD in paleontology from the Department of Geological Sciences in the Jackson School of Geosciences at The University of Texas at Austin in 2008.

