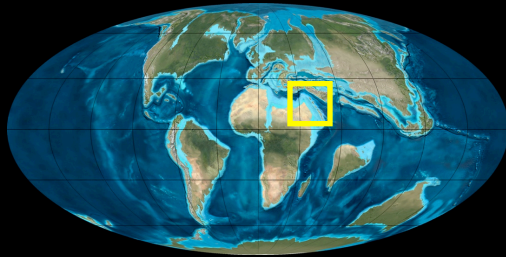


Vertebrate Paleontology of Upper Cretaceous deposits of Jordan

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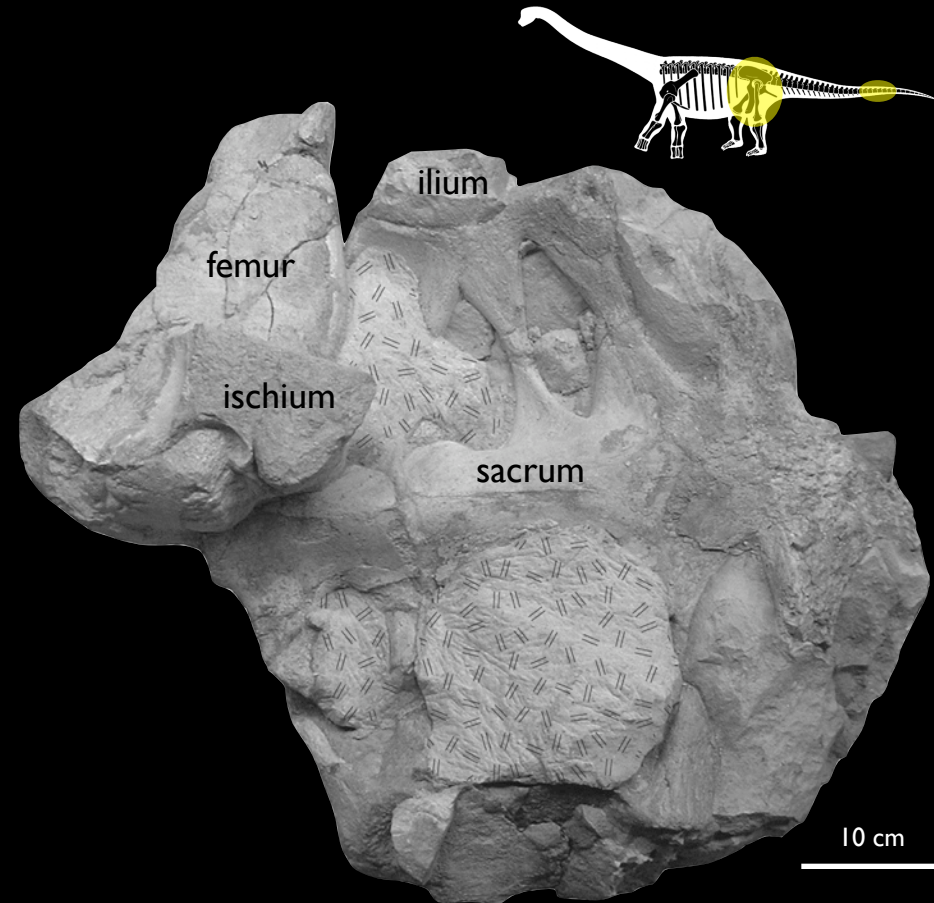
The paleobiogeographic relationships between Africa and neighboring landmasses during the Cretaceous remain a major question, due in part to the paucity of latest Cretaceous African fossils. Jordan and the Arabian Peninsula (yellow box, left) were part of Africa until ~34 mya, during which they were ringed by seas that received erosional products from the continent. Field exploration in Cretaceous deposits in southern Jordan provides a rare glimpse at a latest Cretaceous African ecosystem.

Jordan in the Late Cretaceous (65 mya)

New fossils from this marginal marine environment include a mix of terrestrial and aquatic forms. Of particular interest is the partial skeleton of a new genus and species of sauropod dinosaur (right), which was found in association with inflorescences (fruits) attributable to mangrove palm (below). Surprisingly, the sauropod is quite small, and appears to represent an evolutionary dwarf. Interestingly, the dwarf inhabited a coastal environment and may have fed upon the abundant mangrove palm found there.



fossil mangrove palm inflorescence



dwarf sauropod pelvis and femur