

What is and is not known about the Ghost Ranch Site.

After studying the *Coelophysis* bones to learn what these dinosaurs were like when they were alive, the scientists turned their attention to the positions of the bones in the ground. The arrangement of the bones might give some clues to the mystery of what happened to all these dinosaurs. Why and how did they die? Many complete skeletons were found with almost all their bones still joined together. These skeletons lay flat on their sides with their heads, tails, hands, and feet all at about the same level. When these dinosaurs died, strong muscles in their necks tightened and pulled the neck and head back in a curve toward the tail. In a different arrangement, some skeletons had missing bones and also were separated. Necks were no longer joined to bodies, tails were not attached to hips, and ribs did not touch backbones. These bones had no unusual breaks or tooth marks, so we know that skeletons weren't scattered by predators.

All the skeletons – the nearly complete ones, stretched out on their sides, and the separated ones – lay close together. Some were even piled on top of one another. Other animals were discovered with the *Coelophysis* skeletons: a few fish, phytosaurs, small members of the crocodile family, and a very small lizard. The place where all these animals were buried is about thirty feet long and at least thirty feet wide. Around the bones are red rocks made of mud once carried by an ancient river.

Looking closely at the skeletons, paleontologists could see that none of the bones of any of the dinosaurs or the other animals seemed to be cracked from drying a long time in the sun. After considering these facts and all the other clues from the bones, the scientists have suggested a number of possible scenes that might explain the *Coelophysis* burial ground at Ghost Ranch. We can test these hypotheses, by comparing them with the evidence found in the bones and the rocks around them.