

Lecture Information:

Egypt's vast archaeological record and engaging material culture have long excited people around the world, but did you know that this region's history stretches back well into the Mesozoic Era, or Age of Dinosaurs? In the early 20th century, a series of German expeditions recovered fossils of several new and extraordinary ~95-million-year-old dinosaur species from the Bahariya Oasis in Egypt's Western Desert, most famously the enormous sail-backed semi-aquatic predator *Spinosaurus aegyptiacus*. Tragically, however, all these fossils were destroyed during a British Royal Air Force bombing of Munich in late April 1944. In 2000, a collaborative Egyptian-American research team co-led by Matt Lamanna became the first scientists to discover dinosaur fossils in the Bahariya Oasis in nearly a century; among these were a partial skeleton of a new and gigantic sauropod (long-necked plant-eating dinosaur) that was later named *Paralititan stromeri*. More recently, researchers from the Mansoura University Vertebrate Paleontology Center in Mansoura, Egypt—including its co-founder, Sanaa El-Sayed—have collected additional, important dinosaur fossils from Bahariya, and moreover have expanded their paleontological efforts to include geologically younger (~75-million-year-old) sites in the Kharga and Dakhla oases. Foremost among their finds from the latter is another new sauropod, *Mansourasaurus shahinae*, which constitutes one of the best-preserved late Mesozoic-aged land-living backboned animals known from the entire African continent. Collectively, these discoveries have cast unprecedented light on Egypt's remarkable dinosaurs, helping to restore a scientific legacy that was lost during the Second World War.

Speaker Bios:

Sanaa El-Sayed is co-founder of the Mansoura University Vertebrate Paleontology Center, headquartered in Mansoura, Egypt and home to the first dedicated vertebrate paleontology program in that country and the Middle East as a whole. She is also one of the first women to pursue a career in vertebrate paleontology in the Middle East and the first female student from that region to lead a peer-reviewed scientific paper in vertebrate paleontology. In 2020, Sanaa was awarded a fully funded fellowship from the Egyptian government to pursue a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, and she began her studies there in 2021. She has been featured in prominent media outlets (e.g., *National Geographic*, *Discover* magazine, the BBC) and in two books detailing the accomplishments of female vertebrate paleontologists, the scholarly *Rebels, Scholars, Explorers: Women in Vertebrate Paleontology* and the young audience book *She Found Fossils*. Sanaa's career has helped to set an example for young female Egyptian scientists, empowering them to follow their dreams regardless of preexisting customs and traditions.

Matt Lamanna is the Mary R. Dawson Associate Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology and the principal dinosaur researcher at Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh. He received his B.Sc. from Hobart College in 1997 and his M.Sc. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1999 and 2004. Within the past 25 years, he has directed or co-directed field expeditions to Antarctica, Argentina, Australia, China, Croatia, Egypt, and Greenland that have resulted in the discovery of numerous new species of dinosaurs and other fossil animals from the Cretaceous Period, the third and final time period of the Mesozoic Era, or Age of Dinosaurs; indeed, he is one of only a handful of paleontologists to have found dinosaur fossils on all seven continents. Lamanna served as chief scientific advisor to Carnegie Museum of Natural History's \$36M *Dinosaurs in Their Time* gallery exhibition and has appeared on television programs for PBS (*NOVA*), the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, A&E, the Science Channel, and more.