

## *Gastonia burgei*



### *Gastonia burgei*

Pronounced: gas-TONE-ee-ah burg-eye

Name Meaning: In honor of Robert Gaston and Don Burge.

Lived: Early Cretaceous about 125-130 MYA

Rock Strata: Yellow Cat Member, Cedar Mountain Formation.

Length: 15-18 feet (4.5 – 5.5 meters)

Height: 3½ ft at back

Width: 4 feet at the hips

Weight: 2000 lbs

Place Found: eastern Utah.

Discoverer: Robert Gaston

## UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY EASTERN PREHISTORIC MUSEUM

155 East Main Street - Price, Utah  
800-817-9949 - [museum.ceu.edu](http://museum.ceu.edu)

The Prehistoric Museum is home to three mounted armor-plated ankylosaurs skeletons: *Gastonia burgei*, *Animantarx ramaljonesi*, and *Peloroplites cedromontanus*. These skeletons were collected within 150 miles of the museum. They lived 130-100 million years ago, making eastern Utah one of the richest places for Early Cretaceous ankylosaurs. Their descendants became extinct 66 million years ago during the Great Dinosaur Die-off.

Ankylosaurs were four-legged, heavily armored dinosaurs. This armor consisted of spines or spikes along the sides of the neck, body and tail, and various sized keeled plates over the rest of the body. One group, called the ankylosaurids, had large plates that fused together to make a club on the end of the tail. Even the belly of ankylosaurs was armored, with marble-sized bone. Ankylosaur armor formed in the skin like it does in crocodiles.

The teeth are small for the size of the head and are best suited for eating plants. To help digest their food, ankylosaurs have a wide pelvis that holds an enormously large gut. Bacteria break down the plant, releasing the nutrients that are then absorbed. Many herbivores, such as elephants and cows, have a similar system.

*Gastonia burgei* is a medium-sized armored dinosaur named after Robert Gaston, the person who discovered the site, and Don Burge, the founder of the USU Eastern Prehistoric Museum. The brain of *Gastonia* was about the size of a chicken egg. It may not have been the smartest dinosaur, not the fastest, but what it lacked in smarts or speed, it made up for with its body bristling with defensive

spines and spikes. The body armor on the pelvis fused together to form a shield. This feature is characteristic of the ankylosaur family Polacanthidae, but why the shield developed is a mystery. *Gastonia* is usually found as multiple individuals suggesting that it lived in herds.



The *Gastonia burgei* skull is the smallest of the three ankylosaurus skulls displayed above. The largest skull is that of *Peloroplites cedrimontanus*.



Body armor served as protection from predators.