

Stegosaurus stenops



Scientific Name: *Stegosaurus stenops*

Pronounced: STEG-o-SAWR-us

Name Meaning: roof lizard or plated lizard

Time Period: 156-146 Million Years Ago (MYA)

Late Jurassic

Length: 26 - 30 feet

Height: 9 feet tall at the hips

Weight: 6,800 pounds

Diet: Herbivore

Places Found: throughout the western United States

Discoverer: M. P. Felch, found in Colorado in 1885.

The museum's skeleton is from the Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry

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Stegosaurus is a genus of armored dinosaur, with large bone plates along its neck, back and tail. It had a very small head and brain.

Like most plant-eating dinosaurs, it had no teeth in the front of its mouth, but only a beak. On the sides of the jaws it had tiny, palm-shaped cheek teeth for chewing soft vegetation.

There were 17 bony plates embedded along its back, alternating in alignment. These plates ran from the neck to the tail and they probably had two purposes: One was for show, so that animals could recognize each other, or make themselves look bigger and more threatening; the other reason is to get rid of extra body heat in the hot environment in which they lived .

The largest plates were roughly 2 1/2 feet high and 2 1/2 feet wide and there were bony spikes on the end of the flexible tail. The spikes were up to 18" long and were used to protect them from predators. We see evidence of this with a damaged *Allosaurus* tail vertebra that was pierced by a *Stegosaurus* spike.



Additional protection was provided around the neck area by bone pebbles embedded in the skin of the throat. These protected the wind-pipe from bites by predators.



Stegosaurus had three toes on the elephant-like hind legs, which were significantly longer than front legs. The toes had blunt hooves like many plant-eating dinosaurs. Because it is so front heavy, *Stegosaurus* walked on all fours (quadrupedal).



The small blunt teeth show that *Stegosaurus* was an herbivore. It had a large gut to break down the plants it ate.

Stegosaurus was most probably prey for the likes of *Allosaurus*, *Torvosaurus*, and maybe even smaller meat eaters.