

# *Lizard Country*

By El Schaefer

## **STORY SEED**

Reuben Gaines. Born to a freed black woman in Keosauqua, Iowa in November of 1842. Enlisted in the Union army in October of 1862. Convicted of murder in May of 1868. The judge gives him two options – hang, or join the company settling out at Fort Criswell. Seems like an easy choice – until you find out Fort Criswell is miles deep in Lizard Country.

Educated folks called the creatures “dinosaurs,” said their ancestors once ruled the entire planet – as if everything west of the Rockies weren’t enough. Most just called them Lizards, saurians if they were fancy, sometimes hellsnakes or dirt dragons. God-fearing men said they were unnatural, devils who escaped the Great Flood. Crackpots said Lizard Country was an Eden, untouched by human sin. The natives said the land was fearful, that the “great beasts” were sacred. And President Johnson said it was high time America stake its claim on its rightful territory.

Now Reuben’s going out west, and if he and his company are going to survive, they’ll have to keep their wits sharp, their walls strong, their guns loaded – and their minds open. After all, these varmints have survived for millions of years, and they aren’t letting go without all the fight they have in them. Is there any living with them? Is there any living without them?

## **HIGH CONCEPT**

What if a population of dinosaurs were shielded from the Chicxulub Impact by the Rocky Mountains, surviving and evolving to inhabit the American West where they are discovered and disturbed by settlers’ westward expansion?

In short - it’s 1868, and the Wild West is full of dinosaurs.

# HISTORICAL TIMELINE

*A rule of thumb for timeline development – anything occurring within North America west of the Rocky Mountains should be run through the “dinosaur filter”; any historical events originating outside of or east of the Rockies in North America can be presumed to proceed in approximately the same fashion as in our reality.*

**~71M BC** – Formation of the Rocky Mountains

**~66M BC** – Chicxulub Impact mass extinction event. Sheltered by the Rockies, a small population of dinosaurs survive on the American west coast.

Over the next 60 million years, these remainders continue to hold on, developing a unique ecosystem in the American west. Adapting to shifts in latitude from continental drift, in global climate from ice ages and changing atmospheric conditions, and in food supply due to the prior reasons and continuing evolution, these evolving species tend to become smaller, more heavily feathered, and thicker-bodied.

**~20K BC** – Humans cross the Beringia land bridge and settle the Americas. While the interior Clovis route leads indigenous populations to settle east of the Rockies comparably to our timeline, the pacific coastal route is effectively blocked by saurian presence, thus the tribes of the Northwest Coast, Plateau, California, Great Basin, and Southwest regions are never formed.

In following years, knowledge of dinosaurs in the lands beyond the mountains pass into indigenous religion and folklore, tribes differing on the nature of the beasts – some revering them (e.g. influencing depictions of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl), others disparaging them – but all agreeing that they and their land are not to be infringed upon.

**1432 AD** – The last voyage of the Ming Treasure Fleet lands on the northwest coast, losing several members but bringing back a “dragon egg” which was presented to the Xuande Emperor. While the egg did hatch, the infant “dragon” did not survive long and was believed to be “deformed.” This perceived failure contributed to the dissolution of the Ming Fleet the following year.

**1492 AD** – The Columbus voyage stumbles upon the Bahamian island of Guanahani, “discovering” the Americas for Europe and kicking off colonization.

**1519 AD** – As Spanish colonization reaches Mexico, Europeans are first exposed to indigenous lore of the “great lizards”, but this is dismissed as myth.

**June 1542 AD** – The Spanish Cabrillo Expedition sails north out of the port of Navidad to explore the west coast. The party is never heard from again.

**March 1543 AD** – A second Spanish party sails out following the Cabrillo Expedition, this time better supplied and made up primarily of armed Tercios. 6 months later, only a handful of survivors return, raving about giant man-eating *diablos* and urging to abandon exploring the area.

As the colonial era continues, while early tensions between the Spanish, French, and British remain, later competition between the US, Britain, and Canada is lessened, with the contentious territory in the Pacific Northwest being part of saurian territory and thus unavailable.

**1677 AD** – Naturalist Robert Plot discovers what will later be classified as dinosaur bones in Europe.

**1741 AD** – The Russian Bering voyage discovers Alaska.

**1756-1763 AD** – Tensions between Britain, France, and the Native American population are inflamed in the Seven Years’ War.

**1775-1783 AD** – America gains independence from Britain in the Revolutionary War.

**1784 AD** – The Russian colony at Three Saints Bay on Kodiak Island, Alaska is established.

**1799 AD** – With the Ukase of 1799, Russia claims Alaska as a territory above the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel north, bumping up against the northern tip of saurian territory. While “saurian” remains the official academic term for the large reptilian species of the west, it is colloquially superseded by capital-L “Lizard”.

**1801 AD** – The term “Lizard Country” is coined by Georgia senator Abraham Baldwin to refer to saurian territory, being picked up by President Thomas Jefferson and quickly passing into common use.

**1803 AD** – The Louisiana Purchase cedes much of the available land on the North American continent to the United States.

Westward expansion and Manifest Destiny, while still appealing in concept, see less practical traction as both social and individual attempts at westward settlement are stunted by the environmental dangers and social fear of Lizard Country. With less drive to move west, midwestern territories initially receive less attention and support from the government and society but will later experience a boom with the rise of the agrarian economy.

**August 1805 AD** – The Lewis & Clark expedition ends in disaster as the party is attacked by “swarming beasts” while camped in the Rockies. With 8 dead, including William Clark himself, and several others severely injured, the expedition is turned back.

Notably not among the expedition members is Shoshone guide Sacagawea, as said tribe would never have developed, likely contributing to the overall difficulty of the expedition.

**1812 AD** – The War of 1812 sees aggression between America and British Canada. While they are occupied, the Tsaryov Party sails from Russian Alaska down along the west coast to scout out Lizard Country, returning after just under a month on land, making no permanent settlements but returning with minimal casualties and new knowledge of the saurian northwest. Plans are made for another expedition to assess the promising resource yield and create a more permanent outpost, but are put on hold by news of the French invasion of Russia.

**1815 AD** – Professor William Buckland discovers a partial dinosaur skeleton in England.

**1824 AD** – Buckland concludes that the skeleton he discovered belonged to an extinct bipedal carnivorous lizard which he names “Megalosaurus.”

**1832 AD** – As Russia’s hold on Alaska weakens, their plans to further explore Lizard Country are reluctantly shut down, and British Canada slowly begins to expand the borders of British Columbia further northwest.

**1842 AD** – Buckland coins the term “dinosaur” to refer to his discovered extinct large reptiles.

**February – August 1846 AD** – Following the US annexation of the Republic of Texas, the Quarrie Expedition, a team of soldiers and naturalists commissioned by President James Polk and led by Robert Quarrie, cross into Lizard Country (as deep as the modern Colorado-Utah border) and report back their observations of the species, ecology, and resources, expanding on the knowledge collected by the Tsaryov Party.

**1846-1849 AD** – The Mexican-American War. Between Mexico having proportionally more to lose, America having less to gain, and the nonexistence of the California Republic, while America manages to claim some northeastern territory from Mexico, the latter comes out largely on top in the conflict.

**1849 AD** – A team of scientists, including Quarrie Expedition member Henry Evecker, propose that the saurian inhabitants of Lizard Country may descend from ancient dinosaurs.

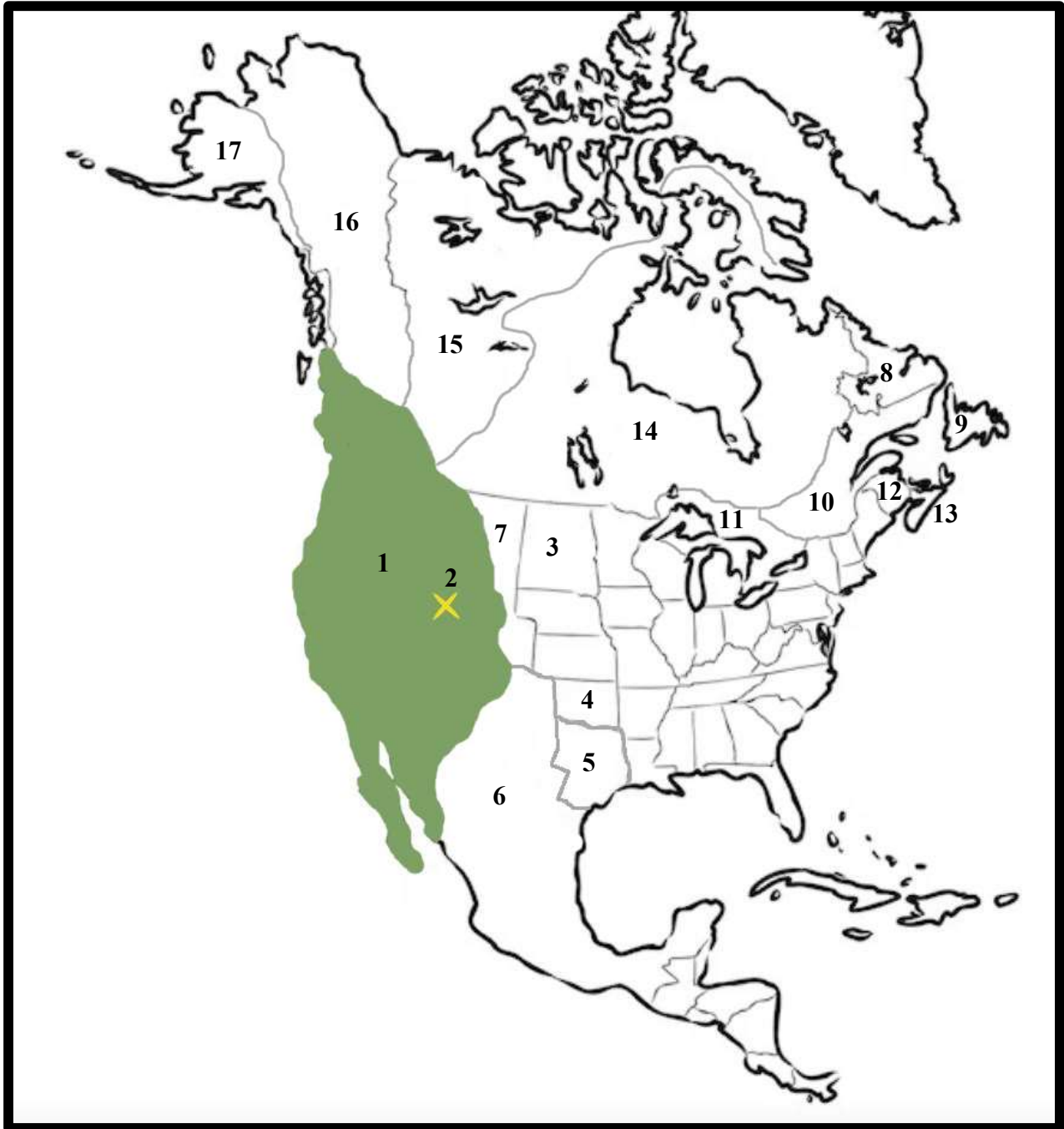
**1857 AD** – Following the Crimean war, a series of skirmishes break out between British Canadian and Russian forces on their border in Alaska, but negotiations and further ceding of territory prevent the conflict from escalating. Still, Russia is reluctant to fully release their holdings in Alaska due to the rich natural resources and access to Lizard Country, in which they maintain interest.

**1861 – 1866 AD** – The American Civil War. Confined to a smaller area, the conflict is even more heated, more prolonged, and the outcome even more uncertain – while the Union succeeds, Confederate enclaves hold more sway.

**1867 AD** – The Dominion of Canada is formed. Spurred by post-war socioeconomic distress, inter- and intranational territorial tension, and the last gasps of Manifest Destiny, the US government authorizes plans to explore and settle Lizard Country, variously perceived as a brave, necessary exploration or a meaningless, dangerous boondoggle. The year’s end sees the foundation of Fort Criswell, led by and named for General Jonathan Criswell.

**1868 AD** – Present Day. Fort Criswell, despite the significant challenges of Lizard Country, perseveres. In response to this successful territorial claim, Canada, Russia, and Mexico begin gearing up to make their own forays into Lizard Country.

# MAP



This map denotes the state, national, and other territorial borders of North America as of May 1868.



The area highlighted in green is Lizard Country (1), as bordered by the Rocky Mountains, with Fort Criswell (2) marked with the yellow X (in the modern Ashley National Forest, near Lonetree, Wyoming).

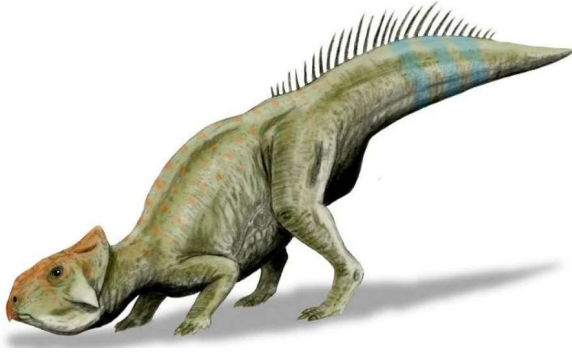
While many American state borders are similar to their modern counterparts, there are differences. Some are purely down to timeline, with Dakota Territory (3) not yet being split into states, and Indian Territory (4) not yet being absorbed as the state of Oklahoma. In terms of historical deviations, Texas (5) is much smaller – while America’s initial annexation was successful, no further territory was ceded by Mexico (6) after the Mexican-American war. At the western edge of the states there lies a band of unincorporated American territory (7), previously a hotspot for indigenous Americans and runaway slaves to escape persecution, but now seeing more and more settlement as the country and population expand, despite its proximity to Lizard Country.

Up north, the Canadian provinces are laid out quite differently. Most of this is, again, down to time, with Labrador (8), Newfoundland (9), Quebec (10), Ontario (11), New Brunswick (12), and Nova Scotia (13) not yet taking on their current borders, boxed in by Rupert’s Land (14). Further west, we see deviations in the borders of the North-Western Territory (15) and British Columbia (16), extending further northwest into the Alaskan Peninsula, but not enough to drive out Russian Alaska (17) which still lays claim to the northwest coast, maintaining a link with Lizard Country.

## **BIOME**

While the climate, geology, geography, and general biome structure of Lizard Country is the same as the real-life West, its inhabitants are quite different. While not identical to their dinosaur ancestors after millions of years of evolution, these creatures are certainly still distinctive. In general, these saurians tend to be smaller, thicker-bodied, and more densely feathered than their historical counterparts, with respect to cooling climates. After the lean days of winter, saurian mating seasons typically begin with the spring, with eggs laid just before summer starts and hatching between its peak and end. While explorations of Lizard Country such as the failed Lewis & Clark endeavor and the 1812 Tsaryov Party provided insights into the native fauna, the 1846 Quarrie Expedition identified the major species and outlined their behavior, forming the basis of the understanding which is being supplemented by the accounts coming out of Fort Criswell.

## Beak-Dogs



Full Size – 1m high, 2m long

Body Form – Quadrupedal

Distinguishing Features – beaked mouth, small bony ruff, tail spines

Diet – Herbivorous, grazing plants and shrubs, using its bony beak and powerful jaws to tear through dense undergrowth and tree bark.

Range –



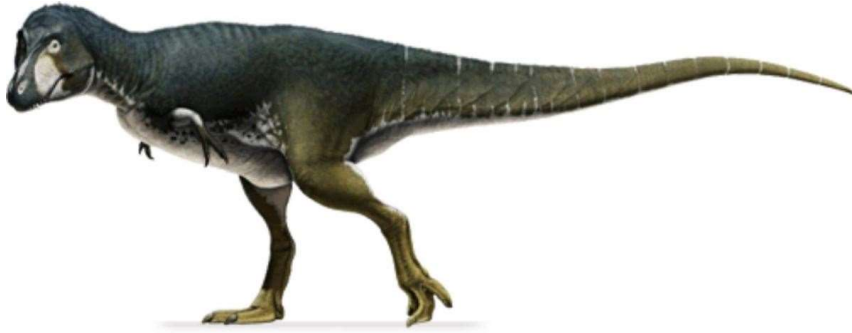
Habitat – These creatures tend to live in forested areas, where ground cover for food and burrows is plentiful.

Behavior – Beak-dogs are social animals, living in family groups in burrows dug into the ground, where young are raised and of which they are quite protective. While more skittish (and sometimes even friendly, at least to humans of which they have no fear instinct) when out grazing, they are more confrontational and defensive on their home turf, with a bite strength that can shatter bone. Their keratinous tail spines are decorative rather than defensive, raised during threat stances and mating displays.

Name Origin – Named for their beaked mouths, and for being less aggressive and more sociable than their larger Tricorn cousins, reminding expedition members of dogs.

Reference Species – cerasinops, ferrisaurus, gryphoceratops, leptoceratops, montanoceratops, prenoceratops, unescoceratops

## Diablos



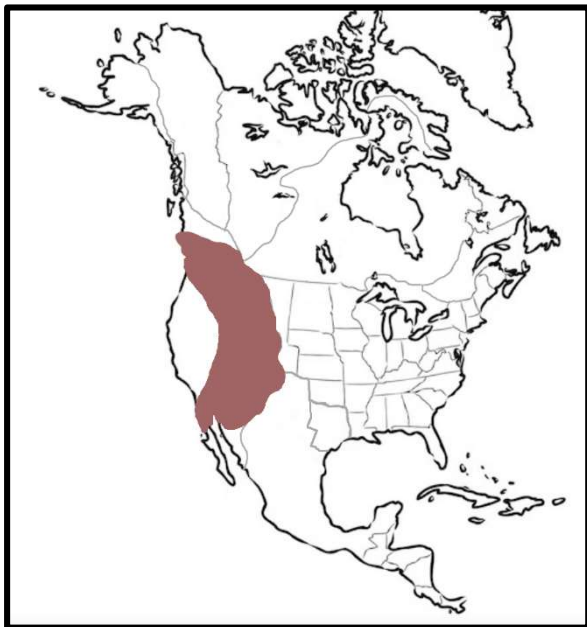
Full Size – 2-3m high, 6-7m long

Body Form – Bipedal

Distinguishing Features – toothy mouth, small forelimbs, sparse feathering

Diet – Carnivorous, hunting and scavenging medium and large prey.

Range –



Habitat – They settle primarily in open areas – plains, plateaus, etc. – though tend to congregate at the edges of forests or near land formations which offer shelter, and they may explore wooded or rocky areas in search of food.

Behavior – Diablos are largely solitary and non-territorial outside of mating seasons, keeping to themselves unless challenging one another for a meal. During mating seasons, both males and females will become more aggressive toward each other as they compete for mates. Bands of brooding pairs will congregate to hatch and raise young together in a territory until the young can travel, at which point the group will disperse once again, mothers caring for their children until they separate at roughly one year old.

Name Origin – Based on recorded descriptions, these creatures are presumed to be the “*diablos*” (devils) encountered by Spanish Tercios in 1544

Reference Species – albertosaurus, aublysodon, bistahieversor, daspletosaurus, dynamoterror, gorgosaurus, labocania, lythronax, siats, suciasaurus, teratophoneus, thanatotheristes, tyrannosaurus

## Ground Buzzards



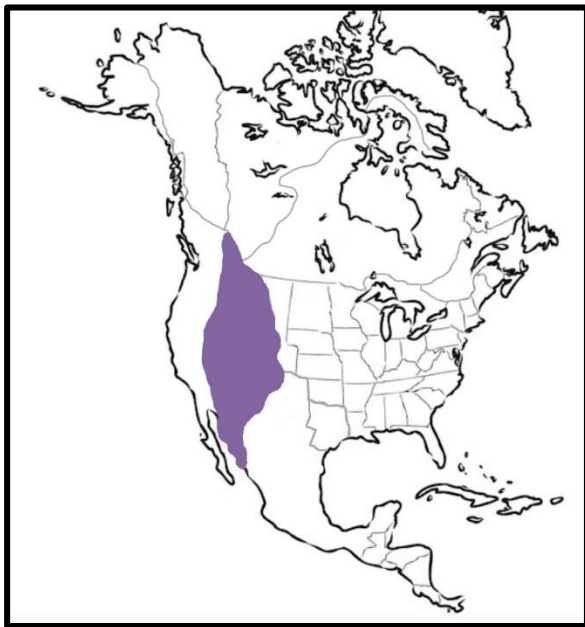
Full Size – 1m high, 2m long

Body Form – Bipedal

Distinguishing Features – toothy mouth, feathers, large foot claws

Diet – Carnivorous, hunting and scavenging small and medium prey.

Range –



Habitat – They are habitat generalists, living across a variety of biomes wherever they can establish a nest and 5-10 square miles of territory.

Behavior – Ground buzzards live, travel, and hunt in packs made up of family groups of up to 20 members, packs which are highly territorial. They're opportunistic feeders, going after scavenged or smaller prey (or human food scraps) when available, but will collaborate to hunt down larger prey as needed, using their keen hearing, high speed (surpassing 30 miles per hour), gliding jump, and vicious talons to leap on and take down meals. Based on accounts, these were almost certainly the “swarming beasts” that brought disaster to the Lewis & Clark expedition.

Name Origin – named for their ground-dwelling nature, and for their hunting habits, claws, and sparser head feathering reminding expedition members of buzzards and vultures.

Reference species – acheroraptor, albertavenator, atociraptor, bambiraptor, boreonykus, dineobellator, dromaeosaurus, hesperonychus, moros, paraxenisaurus, paronychodon, polyodontosaurus, saurornitholestes, talos



## Hardheads



Full Size – 2m high, 3-4m long.

Body Form – Bipedal

Distinguishing Features – Prominent horn-rimmed skullcap

Diet – Omnivorous, primarily consuming leaves, seeds, and fruits, but occasionally scavenging and hunting small prey in lean times.

Range –



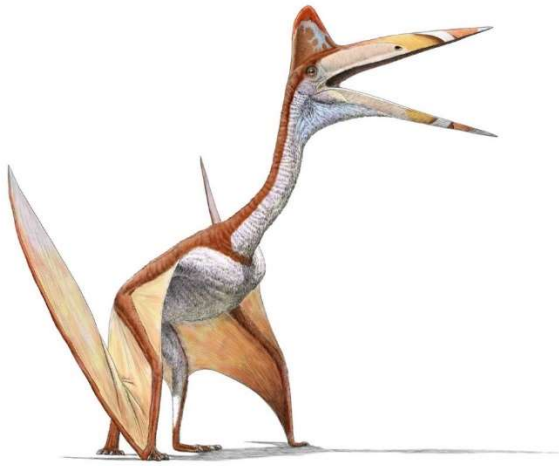
Habitat – They tend to live in rocky, rugged areas – foothills, mountain slopes, etc. – in warm to temperate climates.

Behavior – Hardheads live in herds, with no clearly defined dominance hierarchy or mate-pairing. They use their hard, spiked heads as a battering ram in defense of themselves or the herd from predators and in competition or play with other hardheads.

Name Origin – named for their thick skulls and headbutting behaviors.

Reference species – acrotholus, colepiocephale, foraminacephale, gravitholus, hanssuesia, pachycephalosaurus, sphaerolitholus, stegoceras

## Hellkites



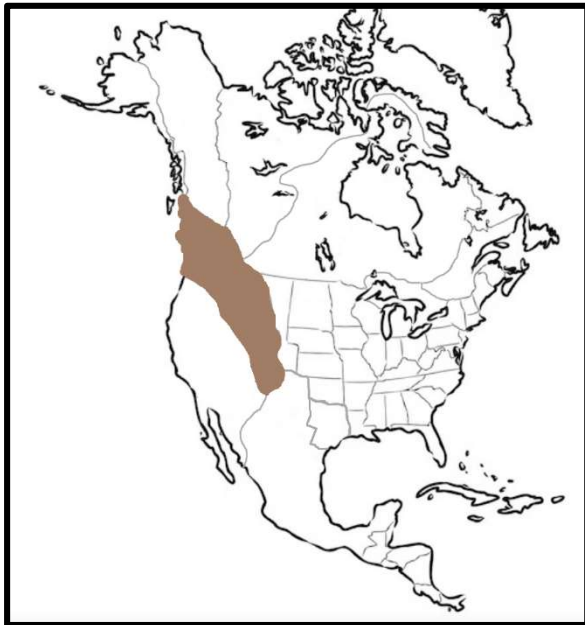
Full Size – 2m long, 6m wingspan

Body Form – Flying

Distinguishing Features – long neck, long thick beak, bony crest, sparse or no feathers

Diet – Carnivorous, hunting small and medium prey.

Range –



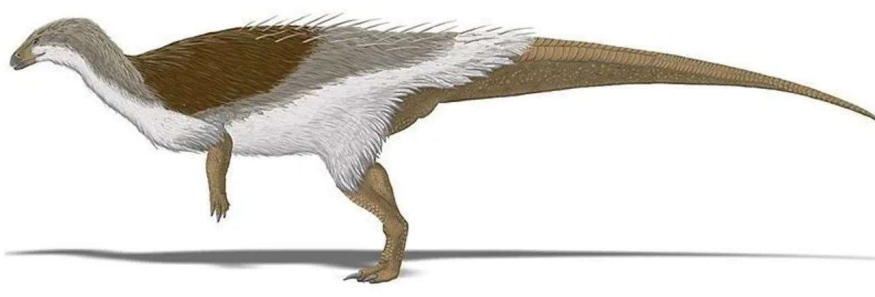
Habitat – They settle in mountainous or forested areas with large, high trees or rock ridges for them to nest in, establishing a 2-5 square mile territory.

Behavior – Hellkites are either solitary or pair-bonded with a mate, and are highly protective of their territory from predators and other hellkites. Hellkites are non-migratory, and tend to become more aggressive in the winter when their energy is lessened and prey is scarce. Their flight speeds can reach up to 40mph, and they can carry up to half their body weight in prey, which they swoop down on and carry off with in their serrated beaks.

Name Origin – a 17<sup>th</sup> century word which figuratively referred to a malicious individual, but which more literally referred to a bird of prey.

Reference species – cryodrakon, montanazhdarcho, navajodactylus, pteranodon

## Morfowl



Full Size – 1m high, 2-3m long

Body Form – Bipedal

Distinguishing Features – full feathers, slender necks

Diet – Omnivorous, grazing plants and grains, and scavenging and hunting small prey.

Range –



Habitat – Their settling depends on the time of their migration cycle, found in the northern hills and mountains in the summer and the southern prairies in the winter.

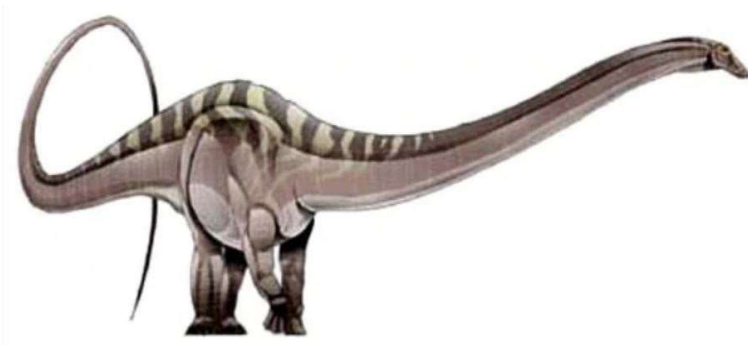
Behavior – Morfowl are migratory, their behavior cyclical with the seasons – while in the winter months flocks can be found spread out across the south of Lizard Country, spring sees them

travel up north to the mountains, where in the height of summer they dig nests and breed. Morfowl are monogamous, returning to the same nest spots and the same mates year after year. Come autumn, they spread south again with their children in tow. Flocks tend to be guided by the eldest members, with older males defending the group from threats. Morfowl tend to be rather skittish, preferring flight over fight, and will eat whatever is available, be it plants, bugs, or human trash.

Name Origin – from the Latin *mordere* (to bite) and fowl (bird)

Reference species – albertadromeus, albertonykus, caenagnathus, nevadadromeus, ojuraptorsaurus, orodromeus, oryctodromeus, parkosaurus, stenonychosaurus, trierarchuncus

## Raffnecks



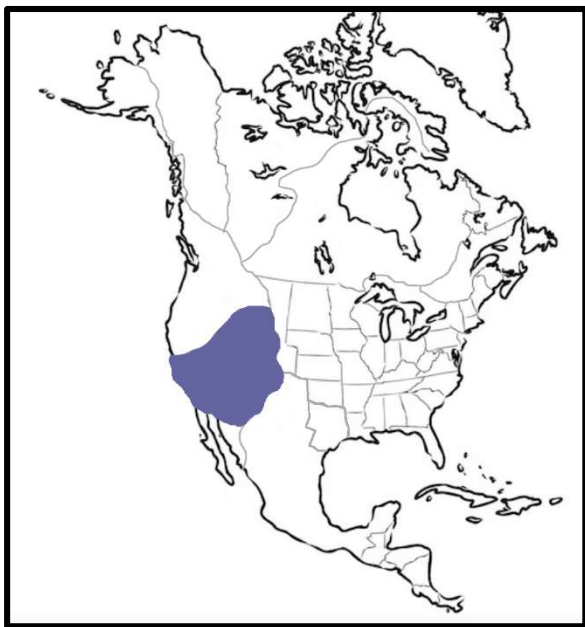
Full Size – 3m high (at the back), 10-15m long

Body Form – Quadrupedal

Distinguishing Features – Long necks and tails

Diet – Herbivorous, eating leaves and mosses off trees.

Range –



Habitat – They live in densely forested areas, with trees tall and established enough for them to eat from.

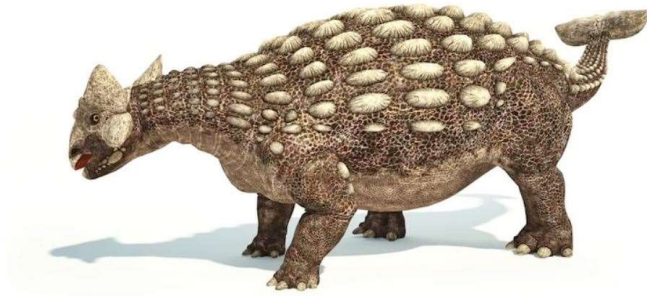
Behavior – Raffnecks are very peaceful creatures, owing largely to their lack of predation – the only predators large enough to threaten them are diablos, and usually only if said diablo has no easier options. That said, if they are threatened (for instance, if they intrude on a hellkite nest while searching for food), they can move quite quickly for their size, and that size does present a threat to smaller creatures which don't watch themselves around raffnecks' powerful feet and muscular tail.

Name Origin – an abbreviation or corruption of “giraffe-neck”, for its long neck and grazing habits

Reference Species – alamosaurus, dyslocosaurus, sonorasaurus



## Shieldbacks



Full Size – 2m high, 4-6m long

Body Form – Quadrupedal

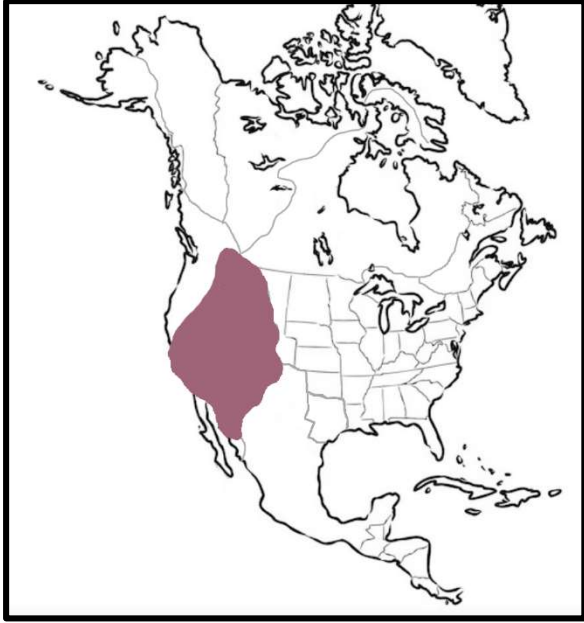
Distinguishing Features – wide armor-plated backs

Morningstar Shieldbacks – bony tail clubs

Pauldroned Shieldbacks – prominent shoulder spikes

Diet – Herbivorous, grazing grasses, shrubs, and plants

Range –



Habitat – They live in the flatlands of Lizard Country, with morningstars found in the hills and meadows of the north and pauldrons in the southern plains and prairies.

Behavior – Shieldbacks wander the plains in large herds of up to 50 members. They use their bony plating and defensive adaptations – the heavy clubbed tails of morningstar shieldbacks and shoulder spikes of pauldroned shieldbacks – to ward off predators. Males also use these in dominance displays in establishing hierarchy and when competing for mates.

Name Origin – named for their wide, armored backs. “Morningstar” arises from the creatures’ tail club resembling the historical weapon, while “pauldroned” refers to historical shoulder armor.

Reference species – acanthopilan, ahshislepelta, akainacephalus, aletopelta, animantarx, ankylosaurus, anodontosaurus, denversaurus, dyoplosaurus, edmontonia, euoplocephalus, glyptodontopelta, invictarx, nodocephalosaurus, nodosaurus, oohkotokia, panoplosaurus, perolopites, platypelta, scolosaurus, stegopelta, ziapelta, zuul

## Tricorns



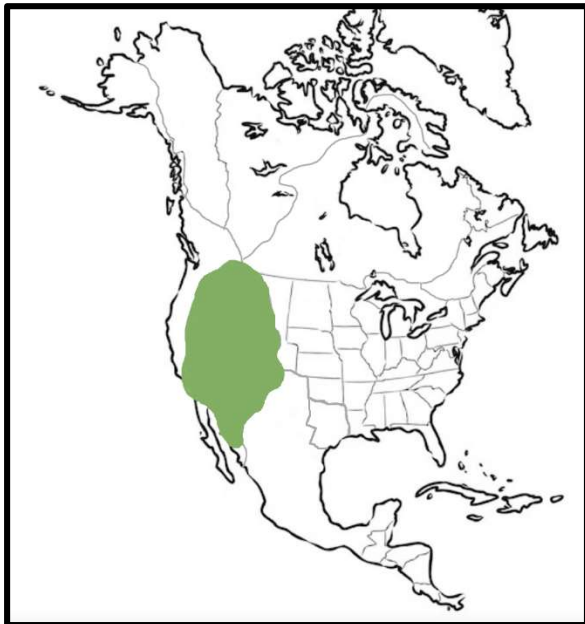
Full Size – 2m high, 4-6m long

Body Form – Quadrupedal

Distinguishing Features – beaked mouth, large bony ruff, nose and brow horns

Diet – Herbivorous, grazing plants and shrubs, using its beak to tear through undergrowth and tree bark.

Range –



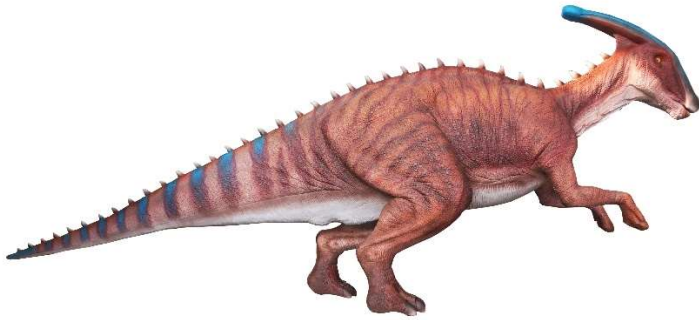
Habitat – They live in green areas, all along the meadows, forests, and hills of Lizard Country.

Behavior – Tricorns live in family groups of 5-15 members, led and protected by the bull patriarch, in a wandering range of 10-15 square miles. When challenged – by a predator or other tricorns – they will first engage in threat displays to try and warn off the danger, stomping and tearing at their surroundings with their horns. If the challenge persists, they may choose to fight or flee depending on the danger to themselves and their herd.

Name Origin – named for its three horns, and for a perceived resemblance between its frill and a bicorn or tricorn hat.

Reference Species – achelousaurus, albertaceratops, anchiceratops, arrhinoceratops, avaceratops, bisticeratops, brachyceratops, centrosaurus, ceratops, chasmosaurus, coahuilaceratops, coronosaurus, crittendenceratops, diabloceratops, dysganus, einiosaurus, eotriceratops, judiceratops, kosmoceratops, machairoceratops, medusaceratops, menefeceratops, mercuriceratops, monoclonius, nasutoceratops, navajoceratops, pachyrhinosaurus, pentaceratops, polyonax, regaliceratops, sierraceratops, spiclypeus, spinops, stellasaurus, styracosaurus, terminocavus, titanoceratops, torosaurus, triceratops, utahceratops, vagaceratops, wendiceratops, xenoceratops, yehuehcauhceratops, zuniceratops

## Trumpeters



Size (grown) – 2m high, 5m long

Body Form – Bipedal/Quadrupedal, can go up on hind legs or use front legs for support

Distinguishing Features – wide ducklike mouths, prominent bony crests

Diet – Herbivorous, grazing grasses, shrubs, and plants.

Range –



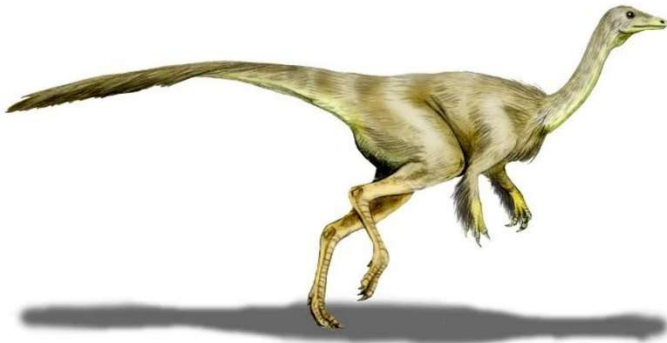
Habitat – Herds can be found in fields and forests all across Lizard Country, though particularly in proximity to lakes and rivers.

Behavior – Trumpeter dams and juveniles live communally in herds of up to 200 members, while bull males live solitarily or in separate groups until the mating season. With rare exceptions when males challenge each other for mates, trumpeters will almost universally meet challenges by fleeing. Their sonorous calls allow them to communicate across great distances, and seemingly in significant detail, able to denote specific dangers, directions, and more.

Name Origin – named for their resonant, trumpeting calls.

Reference species – acristavus, adelolophus, anasazisaurus, augustynolophus, brachylophosaurus, cionodon, corythosaurus, diclonius, edmontosaurus, eolambia, glishades, gryposaurus, huehuecanauhtlus, hypacrosaurus, jeyawati, kritosaurus, lambeosaurus, latirhinus, magnapaulia, maiasaura, naashoibitosaurus, ornatops, parasaurolophus, probrachylophosaurus, prosaurolophus, pteropelyx, saurolophus, stephanosaurus, tlatolophus, trachodont, velafrons

## Westriches



Size (grown) – 1.5-2m high, 4-5m long

Body Form – Bipedal

Distinguishing Features – long tail, birdlike feet, fine feathers across the body

Diet – Omnivorous, consuming plants and shrubs, scavenging and hunting small prey

Range –



Habitat – These creatures run along the prairies and plateaus of the southwest.

Behavior – Westriches’ defining adaptation is their running speed, topping out at 40 miles per hour, letting them easily evade hunting or confrontation. They are largely solitary, but not aggressively so – they will not attack other westriches if they encounter each other, and one westrich seeing another fleeing will likely join in to avoid the same threat, which in populous areas can lead to stampedes. During mating season, males will perform elaborate “dances” for females to win them over, and then take primary custody of any eggs while the mothers move on.

Name Origins – The name is derived from an etymological malapropism – believing that the “ost” in “ostrich” meant east, these creatures were named for being the “west’s ostriches”. Also sometimes referred to as “struthids” in academic settings.

Reference species - chirostenotes, citipes, dromiceiomimus, epichirostenotes, hagryphus, mothronychus, ornithomimus, rativates, struthiomimus, thescelosaurus, tototlmimus



## **OTHER WILDLIFE**

While large non-saurian fauna can be found around the outskirts of Lizard Country, they go largely unseen once across the mountains due to being outcompeted by Lizards in the same ecological niches (compare elk vs. trumpeters, coyotes vs. ground buzzards, bison vs. tricorns & shieldbacks, etc.). The ecosystem is rounded out by the various birds, small mammals, plants, etc. of the American west, as well as some unique species of plants, large insects, fish, and mollusks descended from contemporaries of the dinosaurs.

## **The Enclosure Question**

Scientists have long questioned why the saurian species of Lizard Country have never proliferated beyond the west, particularly with outside species' success migrating into and adapting to the region. Several theories have been proposed regarding this lack of movement – climate adaptations preventing saurian travel beyond their current latitudes, specific dietary requirements not fulfilled outside of the region, competition from Pleistocene megafauna, modern animals, or indigenous humans – all of which are likely factors rather than the single cause.

# **FORT CRISWELL**

Established in 1867 by General Jonathan Criswell and his men on behalf of the United States, Fort Criswell is the first permanent settlement established in Lizard Country. Situated just past the mountains (in the modern Ashley National Forest), the fort lies in a well-appointed spot for water, food, and other necessary resources – and at the crux of the habitats of just about every Lizard species in the west. While capable of holding up to 350 people, between the recruitment and mortality rates, the fort generally houses between 150-200 residents, all of them male. Contact with America is minimal – few communications go out except for official missives, and the time between message and reply can take up to a month when the passes are unblocked. Shipments of additional supplies and new recruits typically arrive every 3-4 months.

## **Personnel**

Commanding the fort is its namesake, General Jonathan Criswell. Ranked below him are his senior officers, including his second-in-command Samuel Wright and fort physician Dr. Jacob Bond, as well as the two on-site naturalists studying the ecology of Lizard Country – Drs. Benjamin Durham and William Evecker, son of Quarrie Expedition member Henry Evecker. Another rank below are the junior officers, including the fort’s metalworker, carpenter, and cook.

At the bottom of the hierarchy, making up around 70% of the residents of Fort Criswell, are the volunteers. Some of these volunteers are truly voluntary, signing up to ship out to Lizard Country for whatever reason – patriotism, post-war distress, want of purpose, etc. Given the reputation of the fort and its environment, however, recruitment is generally quite low. Thus, to bolster the mission’s ranks, under the prison labor provision of the new 13<sup>th</sup> amendment, higher-ups in the capital authorized jurisdictions throughout the union to sentence criminals to service at Fort Criswell should they meet certain criteria (behavior, homesteading skills, military service, etc.). Many such sentenced are people of color – African Americans, indigenous Americans, and the occasional Mexican or Tejano recruit. While not an official separation in rank, true volunteers often receive preferential treatment compared to the sentenced, due to differences in attitude, racial tensions, perceived criminality, and General Criswell’s resentment of his mission being treated as a punishment.

## **Buildings**

**Armory** – The fort maintains an arsenal of weaponry for hunting and defense from the beasts of Lizard Country. The armory is managed and guarded at all times by a senior officer to maintain order and prevent theft of arms by juniors or volunteers.

**Barracks** – Volunteers sleep, wash, and otherwise live communally in the barracks hall.

**Corrals** – Corrals hold the horses, pigs, and other livestock kept at the fort for work, food, and fertilizer. These pens are heavily fenced to prevent either the animals getting out or Lizards getting in.

**Criswell's Crick** – Water and fish are provided by the creek around which the fort is built, colloquially referred to as Criswell's Crick.

**Farmland** – Out in the plains, outside the walls of the fort, are fields cleared for growing crops to supplement gathered and stored food. These fields are tended by volunteers, and are heavily fenced and surveilled from the watchtowers to prevent Lizards from destroying the crops.

**Graveyard** – Whether it be due to the Lizards or the many other dangers of establishing a settlement in the wild, Lizard Country is a dangerous place. Fort Criswell commemorates its dead in a plot outside the walls, burying bodies (when they can be retrieved) under layers of stones to prevent them being scavenged by Lizards.

**Hospital** – Situated near the gate to the graveyard, the medical building houses and treats the sick and, more often, the injured.

**Kitchen & Mess** – All on-site officers and volunteers eat meals together in the mess hall, prepared in the kitchen by the cook and a handful of select volunteer assistants.

**Laundry** – Volunteers wash and mend their own clothing in the laundry, while officers have theirs tended by select volunteers.

**Lumberyard** – Wood for fires, building, and tool repairs is collected or cut from the forest and brought to the lumberyard outside the walls to be cut to size.

**Officers' Hall** – Officers live in and run the fort from the officers' hall, senior officers with their own rooms, junior officers in a barracks.

**Outhouses** – Outhouses are located by the wall of the fort near the living quarters. Collected waste is used as fertilizer in the farmlands.

**Metalworking & Carpentry Sheds** – Between them, the metalworker and carpenter see to the fort's upkeep, maintaining buildings, tools, and weaponry.

**Storehouses** – Preserved food and other supplies are stored in storehouses, guarded at all times by at least one officer.

**Walls** – The fort is surrounded by high, thick wooden walls to keep out unwanted Lizard guests.

**Watchtowers** – Five watchtowers ring the fort, each manned at all times by a junior officer or volunteer watching over the goings-on outside – and sometimes inside – the fort.

### **Natural Resources**

Pushing through the dangers, settlers at Fort Criswell have discovered a wealth of materials in Lizard Country ripe for the taking. The land is arable with plenty of rivers and lakes, the forests are prime for logging and stuffed with small game, and there are signs of coal, metals, and even gold to be mined. Even with the Lizards to contend with, the profits would be significant – and perhaps, for their might or meat, even the beasts could be brought to bear.

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