

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[LYSON:] Even though I've collected thousands and thousands of dinosaur bones and other fossils, every fossil that I find is just quite a thrill because you're the first person that has ever seen that particular dinosaur bone. And then it's a lot of fun because then it's a guessing game. It's like, well, what is it? It could be anything. It could be the skull. It could be a rib. But you just never know. And you slowly uncover it.

[TAPPING]

[LYSON:] So can you see right here there's just a little bit of bone poking out of this big iron concretion. And it's only about that big in diameter. And we're chasing the animal kind of into the hill. And one of the important things about not only this dinosaur but kind of this whole valley here, is that we have several dinosaurs preserved. We have a hadrosaur here. Across the valley, we have a triceratops. Across the valley over there, we have a Tyranosaurus rex.

[TAPPING] So this is basically how you find a dinosaur. You're walking around, looking in these gullies. And then you spot a piece of bone. And you can see it's very porous. And you know that it had to travel down, the force of gravity. You can see the bone trail. Here is a bone. Here is a bone. Follow the trail of bone up. And then here you have a shin bone of a duck-billed dinosaur, really broken up. And then here's where we articulate with the knee joint.

[LYSON:] Well, I think one of the big misconceptions in paleontology is that you just go out in the badlands with your brush and you brush off a complete articulated Velociraptor hand. And that we have a lot of high-tech technology that we can image the ground with to determine where the fossils are. And it's just not the case. You walk around in the badlands out here and you'll pick up numerous, just chunks of dinosaur. Chunkasaurus, that's what we call it. And that's about it. So usually you find piles of bones. And so this specimen is unique in that it is articulated, meaning that the bones are in the right order here. Making it up a much more significant specimen than the dozens and dozens of chunkasaurs that we find. And I've been looking in the Hell Creek Formation for about 17 years now. And I've found only a handful of articulated dinosaurs.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[LYSON:] A lot of people always think of Hell Creek Formation. They think about the dinosaurs, triceratops, and hadrosaurs, and T. rex. But turtles also made up a very large component of the ecosystem then. And bits of turtle shell are really, really common out on the field. But turtles that are this well preserved where you have complete shells like this-- and here you have a beautiful turtle shell on its side. So this is where the arm would come out right here. And here is where the leg would come out. And you can actually see this beautiful leg preserved. Then this exquisite foot, all the way down to each of the claws. Turtles as a whole have survived many extinctions, including the world's greatest extinction, as well as the one that killed the dinosaurs. But, unfortunately, turtles today are not doing so well. And that's because of humans. And the fact that humans like to eat turtles. So their numbers are actually starting to dwindle.