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**CHINESE MUSEUM LOANS FEATHERED DINOSAUR,
OTHER FOSSILS TO THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY**

*Virginia Museum of Natural History officials travel to China to secure loan
of rare collections*

MARTINSVILLE, Va. (June 14, 2006) – Representatives of the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, Virginia recently traveled to the National Geological Museum of China to arrange for the loan of fossils from the famous Yixian Formation of Liaoning Province, including one of the spectacular feathered dinosaurs. As a result of the trip by VMNH Director of Research and Collections Dr. Nicholas Fraser, and VMNH Executive Director Timothy J. Gette, the museum secured the loan of the fossils from January through May 2007. The fossils will be displayed in conjunction with the special exhibit *Chinasaurs: The Great Dinosaurs of China*, at the museum from October 28, 2006 (the fossil will be here beginning in January) to May 28, 2007.

Fraser and Gette made the trip to Beijing at the invitation of Cheng Liwei, director of the National Geology Museum of China. While there, Fraser and Gette presented Liwei with a letter from Virginia Governor Tim Kaine inviting him to the new VMNH facility opening in January 2007. Fraser and Gette also presented a Virginia flag to be displayed at the Chinese museum.

The collaboration between VMNH and the National Geological Museum was forged last summer when Dr. Fraser visited Beijing to examine specimens of Triassic aquatic reptiles that are closely related to similar aged specimens from the Solite Quarry in Pittsylvania County. In addition to small aquatic reptiles, the Solite Quarry has also yielded exquisitely preserved fish, insects and plants. Soft part anatomy and even skin patterning can be visible in these fossils - a phenomenon that Solite shares with the Chinese Yixian fossils.

“Such remarkable preservation is very rarely encountered and visitors to VMNH in January 2007 will be able to compare and contrast the two faunas and floras first hand,” Fraser said.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville seeks to increase understanding of and appreciation for the natural history of the Commonwealth through education, research, collections, publications and exhibits. The museum – an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution – is accredited by the American Association of Museums, a distinction earned by fewer than 10 percent of museums in the United States. A new, \$28 million museum currently is being built in Martinsville. When fully completed in early 2007, the new museum will offer five times the exhibit and public space of the current facility.

The museum is a member of the Association of Science-Technology Centers, Virginia Association of Museums, Heritage Preservation, and an agency of the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia. With 22 million objects in its collection, it reaches nearly 1 million people annually through on-site and traveling exhibitions, classroom outreach programs, the museum’s Web site, public events and publications.

The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. Members are always admitted free. Admission is \$5 for adults; \$4 for senior citizens and youth 12-18; \$3 for children 3 to 11; and free for children 2 and under. For more information about membership or volunteer opportunities, please call 276-666-8600 or visit the museum’s Web site at www.vmnh.net.

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