

# Montana man gets 60 days for dinosaur bones theft

June 2 2009, By MATTHEW BROWN , Associated Press Writer

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(AP) -- A commercial fossil hunter, whose discovery of the world's best-preserved dinosaur brought scientific acclaim, will serve 60 days in jail for stealing raptor bones from private land.

Nathan Murphy, 51, a self-taught paleontologist, was convicted in March of felony theft for taking the raptor [fossil](#) from a ranch in northern Montana.

He is scheduled to be sentenced on July 9 in a separate federal case involving more fossils taken from Bureau of Land Management land.

In 2000, Murphy discovered a mummified, 77-million-year-old duckbilled hadrosaur known as Leonardo, which is considered the best preserved dinosaur in the world.

The bones of the turkey-sized prehistoric raptor at the heart of his theft conviction were found by one of Murphy's workers in 2002. Authorities have seized the bones.

Murphy had sought to have molds of the fossils made that could have brought up to \$400,000 in the sale of casts on the retail fossil market, investigators said.

Since he was charged last year, Murphy had claimed honest mistakes led to the investigation. But in an interview Monday with The Associated Press, he acknowledged concealing the truth about where the raptor

bones were found - and asserted that he is not the only fossil hunter to do so.

"The investigation created a poster boy," he said. "They're going to have Nate Murphy to hold up to the public and say, 'Don't pick up nothing on public land, and know where you are at.' They needed somebody like me."

He must serve his 60 days at some point during the next 6 months.

At his sentencing Wednesday, District Judge John C. McKeon also fined Murphy \$2,500 and ordered him to pay \$650 in restitution.

The [Montana](#) attorney general's office did not have an immediate comment on the case.

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