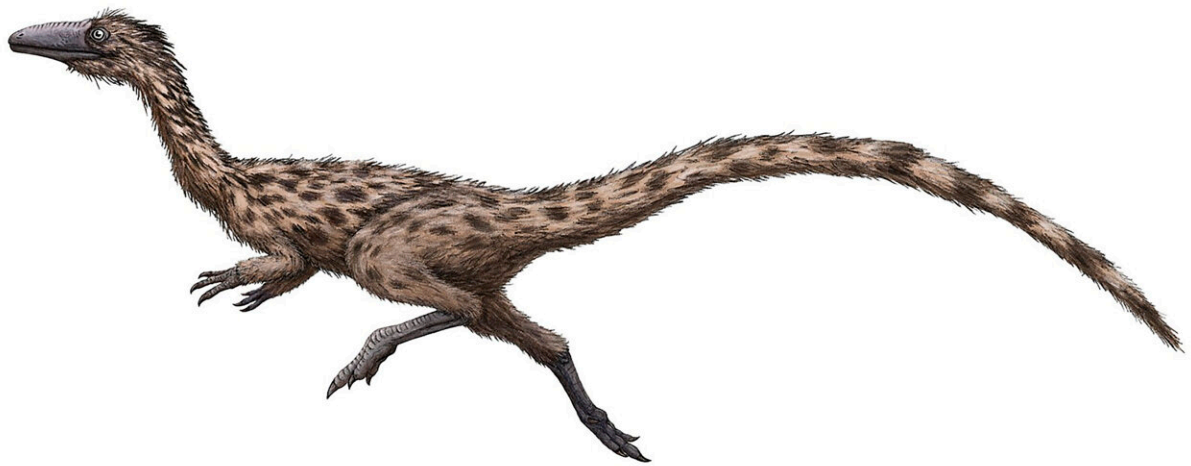


'Swift-footed lizard' named Massachusetts state dinosaur

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This is an artist's rendering of the dinosaur *Podokesaurus holyokensis*, which lived millions of years ago in what is now Massachusetts. The dinosaur, whose name means “swift-footed lizard of Holyoke,” has been named the official dinosaur of Massachusetts under legislation signed into law in Boston, Wednesday, Oct. 19, 2022, by Mass. Gov. Charlie Baker. Credit: FunkMonk Michael B.H. via AP

A "swift-footed lizard" that lived millions of years ago in what is now Massachusetts has been named the state's official dinosaur under legislation signed into law Wednesday by Gov. Charlie Baker.

Podokesaurus holyokensis received more than 60% of the roughly 35,000 votes cast in a social media campaign initiated early last year by state Rep. Jack Lewis, beating out another dinosaur that was also discovered in the state.

"If I think about my own childhood ... the thing that got me interested in science in the first place was dinosaurs," the Republican governor said at the signing ceremony at the Museum of Science in Boston, with some of the state's leading paleontologists standing behind him. "And the main reason they got me interested is because of their majesty, and their ferocity and their almost alien-being status. As a kid, they just created wonder."

Lewis came up with the idea of a state dinosaur while trying to find engaging projects for the Cub Scout den he led during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project did not just get people involved in science, but also taught them about the legislative process, the Framingham Democrat said.

Podokesaurus holyokensis, which means "swift-footed lizard of Holyoke," was discovered in western Massachusetts in 1910 by Mount Holyoke College professor Mignon Talbot, "the first woman to find, discover, name and describe a dinosaur," Lewis said.

"Hopefully if this project inspires just a couple young girls to grow up and explore paleontology, it would have been all worth it," he said.

The species was 3 to 6 feet (around 1 to 2 meters) in length, weighed approximately 90 pounds (40 kilograms), and was estimated to run 9 to 12 mph (14 to 19 kph), Lewis has said.

Baker called the creature "a tough, spunky underdog from Holyoke."

About a dozen other states also have official state dinosaurs, Lewis said.

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