Were T-rexes really that dumb? Correcting 7 major misconceptions we have about dinosaurs

Big and scary they may have been, but dinosaurs were by no means lumbering brutes. The more we learn about them, the more we see just how misguided our early assumptions were.

Here are the seven biggest ways our understanding of dinos has changed…

1. Tyrannosaurus rex

In 1902, in the desolate badlands of Hell Creek, Montana, the palaeontologist Barnum Brown spotted a jumble of enormous bones… In the 120 years since Brown’s discovery, dozens of T. rex skeletons have been found in the 66-million-year-old Cretaceous rocks of North America. Scientists still regard T. rex as one of the largest and strongest carnivores in Earth history.

But the Tyrant Lizard King was no mere brute. It had a large brain and keen senses of smell and hearing, as revealed by CAT scans of fossil skulls. What made T. rex so special was that it had brawn and brains and its body probably sported at least some wispy feathers.

5. Stegosaurus

Everyone knows the Stegosaurus profile today: long body, low shoulders and a row of big vertical plates on its back, each big enough to dwarf a coffee table.

But when Stegosaurus bones were first found in the Jurassic-aged rocks (circa 150 million years old) of North America in the 1870s, palaeontologists had never seen anything like them.

The prickly Yale professor, Othniel Charles Marsh thought they were from some strange, new aquatic species, a turtle, perhaps, with the plates lying flat on its back as a protective carapace.

This inspired the name Stegosaurus, the roofed lizard.

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