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**DINOSAUR FOOTPRINTS FROM
SANFRANCISCANA BASIN (UPPER
JURASSIC-LOWER CRETACEOUS), MINAS GERAIS
STATE - BRAZIL***

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Sedimentary rocks in most Brazilian basins indicate the establishment of extensive paleodeserts from the Jurassic through the whole Cretaceous. In many basins, the occurrences of reptiles associated to these desertic settings are commonly recorded. This paper registers and describes eleven dinosaur footprints that occur in the upper Jurassic(?)/Lower Cretaceous of the Sanfranciscana Basin, Minas Gerais State, Brazil. The ichnofossils are present at the basal part of the Areado Group in a reddish sandstone interpreted as eolian facies of a humid interdune environment. These fossil footprints contribute to a better understanding of the paleogeographic distribution of the reptilian fauna in the south hemisphere during the Mesozoic times.

The ichnofossils were codified as JPAR-1 to JPAR-11. The footprints were preserved as epireliefs filled with sandstone similar to the surrounding matrix. Three of them represent a small track, the rest are isolated forms, generally tridactyl, mesaxonitic with the digitigrade aspects preserved in some cases. The general morphology attributes those fossil footprints to biped

dinosaurs - Theropoda, most probably carnosaurus and coelurosaurs.

Some considerations about the occurrence and preservation of footprints in desertic environments are included. The more diverse biologic activity in deserts are concentrated in interdune areas. The parameters controlling the kind of activity in those settings are: humidity, sedimentation rate and the size of surrounding dunes.

The described footprints are analogs to some ichnofossils that occur in facies of the Botucatu and Caiuá formations (Paraná Basin) and some of the Corda Formation (Parnaíba Basin). Unfortunately, the wide temporal amplitude and the preservational features of these prints make it difficult to obtain a detailed inference of their producers. — (13 de dezembro de 1995).

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