

Source 2

Fearsome Tyrannosaurus rex Sue may have died of a sore throat

A parasite that infects pigeons made it increasingly difficult for the T. rex to swallow and led to starvation, a new study suggests.

by Ian Sample

Sue, the world's largest Tyrannosaurus rex, may have been brought down by a humble parasite.

The most famous specimen on public display was felled not in mortal combat, but by an infection that causes sore throats in pigeons.

Nicknamed Sue, the seven-tonne T. rex at the Field Museum in Chicago (pictured right) is the largest and most complete example of the prehistoric predator ever unearthed. The fossil stretches 13 metres from nose to tail.

The 65 million-year-old beast is known to have survived violent skirmishes that left her with three broken ribs, torn tendons and a damaged shoulder. But according to a study of Sue's remains, her death was far more ordinary than her combat-scarred remains suggest.



Researchers examined gouge marks in Sue's jaw that were thought to have been inflicted in one-on-one battles with other tyrannosaurs.

But closer inspection of the holes revealed striking similarities with indentations seen in modern birds that are caused by a common parasite that infects the mouth and throat.

As the infection spread, Sue would have found it increasingly difficult to swallow and may eventually have starved to death, according to the research. The parasite, which today causes mild infections in pigeons, doves and other wild birds, probably spread by biting.