The Land of the Giants

The giant dinosaur shares its home with other *Dreadnoughtus* and a herd of *Saltasaurus*.

Saltasaurus are also titanosaurs. They are smaller than *Dreadnoughtus*, but have the same long necks, long tails and elephant-like body. The *Saltasaurus* also have a covering of armour on their backs.

A New Generation

As the *Saltasaurus* herd moves off, it leaves behind patches of disturbed ground, dotted with white speckles. The female *Saltasaurus* have been laying eggs. Thousands of round eggs lie in shallow scrapes in the ground, ready to be **incubated** by the hot sun.

The next **generation** of earth-shaking titanosaurs will soon hatch.

Saltasaurus

Dreadnoughtus

Saltasaurus nest

The Earth-Shakers

Dreadnoughtus and *Saltasaurus* lived about 70 million years ago in the late **Cretaceous period**. Their **fossils** have been found in the part of the world that is now Argentina, in South America.

Fossilised Nests

Imagine a wide, flat **river plain**. The land is dotted with dinosaur nests, full of eggs just ready to hatch. Then imagine that the river bursts its banks, flooding the plain and burying the nests under mud.

Thousands of Eggs

This is exactly what happened around 80 million years ago at Auca Mahuevo in Argentina. In the late 1990s, a team of palaeontologists, led by Luis Chiappe, made an incredible find — around 400 dinosaur nests and thousands of fossilised eggs!

No Mums Required

There are no signs of the parents at the site. The female dinosaurs must have laid their eggs and moved on. This suggests that the babies were able to take care of themselves as soon as they hatched.

Dug by Dinosaurs

Each nest was a scrape in the sand. The sweep of the scrape shows that it was made by the back feet of an adult dinosaur. The eggs were not buried. We can tell this because the fossil eggs were covered by a layer of rock. The rock formed from the mud that was deposited by the flood.

Good Luck for Science

The flood was bad luck for the titanosaurs, but good luck for science. The disaster gave us a perfectly fossilised nesting site that has allowed scientists to discover so much about the early life of titanosaurs.

This illustration shows how the nests must have looked.

The eggs were almost round and up to 15 centimetres in diameter.

Each nest contained 15 to 40 eggs.

Fossilised Baby Dinosaurs

Inside the eggs, scientists found fossilised **embryos**, or unhatched baby dinosaurs. From the teeth and the shape of the skull bones, they identified the babies as titanosaurs. The embryos even had skin with armoured scales. This shows that they were babies of an armoured titanosaur, such as *Saltasaurus*.

A model of a baby *Saltasaurus* inside its egg