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Mosasaur fossil found in Korite Mine

Royal Tyrrell Museum team busy removing and transporting giant marine reptile

Drumheller... The 75-million-year-old fossil of a mosasaur, (MO-sa-sore) an extinct, flipper-bearing prehistoric marine reptile, was discovered at the Korite Mine near Lethbridge on February 16, 2012. Staff from the Royal Tyrrell Museum, led by palaeontologist Dr. Donald Henderson, are currently at the mine working on removal of the fossil.

Originally it was thought that only the tail was present, but further investigation has revealed a full specimen, six to seven metres long, as well as a well-preserved skull, 60 to 70 cm long, with an impressive set of teeth. The discovery is significant as it is one of the most completely preserved mosasaur fossils discovered in Alberta.

The Korite Mine produces ammolite, a rare and valuable opal-like organic gemstone popular in jewelry. Ammolite is formed from fossilized, shell-bearing sea creatures called ammonites, which lived among the mosasaurs and other marine reptiles in the Bearpaw Sea that covered Alberta 75-73 million years ago.

In May of this year, the Museum's new exhibit, "Alberta's Last Sea Dragon – Solving an Ancient Puzzle" will feature a new species of elasmosaur, (ell-AZ-mo-sore) also found at the Korite Mine, in 2007. "It's been almost five years since we've found a marine reptile at the Korite Mine," says Andrew Neuman, Executive Director of the Royal Tyrrell Museum. "The Korite Mine and the Museum maintain a very positive relationship, which has led to the recovery of a number of significant fossils."

It is expected that it will take five days to remove the fossil and ready it for transport to the Royal Tyrrell Museum for further study and research.

Operated by Alberta Culture and Community Services, the Royal Tyrrell Museum is located six kilometres northwest of Drumheller and is Canada's only institution devoted exclusively to the science of palaeontology.

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