

“Mo” Ponteix Long-necked Plesiosaur

Terminonatator ponteixensis

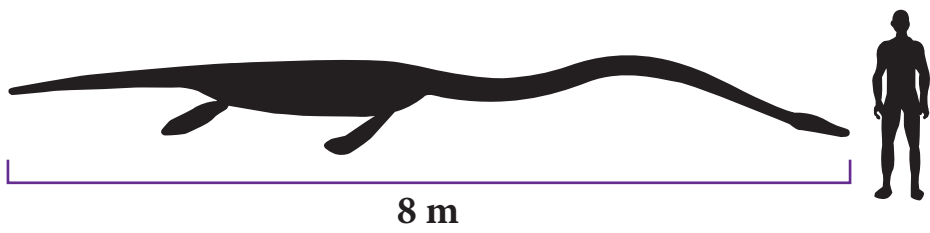
Name means: ‘last swimmer from Ponteix’, in reference to being one of the last known plesiosaurs from North America.

Notable specimen from Saskatchewan: “Mo”, the Ponteix Plesiosaur, Type Specimen. (A type specimen is the one specimen that is used as reference for the description of a new species)



Size:

The estimated length of Mo is nearly 8 m; almost half of which is neck.



Geographic range:

Terminonatator ponteixensis has only ever been found in Saskatchewan, and when discovered it was not only a new species, it represented an entirely new genus.

In Saskatchewan: There is only one known specimen of this long-necked plesiosaur and it was found near Ponteix, Saskatchewan.



Age

Lived near the end of the Cretaceous Period (70 million years ago), when the last remnants of the Western Interior Seaway were still covering much of Saskatchewan. The deposits that contain “Mo” belong to a rock unit called the Bearpaw Formation, which is found throughout much of southern Saskatchewan.

Habitat:

Saskatchewan was under a shallow, muddy sea 70 mya. Other large predators lived in the same waters, including several species of mosasaurs (large, lizard-like swimmers), and short-necked plesiosaurs. This was also the time when the sea was inhabited with large clams, and shelled invertebrates such as ammonites and baculites.

Food Preference:

The proportionally small head, with long, thin teeth suggests that “Mo” was a fish eater. If

“Mo” had attempted to eat prey with larger or thicker bones, it would have broken its teeth. It is believed that the long neck could have aided in the capture of schooling fish. One of the odd things about this plesiosaur was that it ate stones (found in the stomach, these stones are called gastroliths). Gastroliths may have been used to counter buoyancy or possibly to help in food processing.

Relations

Mo belongs to a group of long-necked plesiosaurs, called elasmosaurs. Short-necked plesiosaurs, called polycotyliids, are closely related to elasmosaurs. Plesiosaurs have a long evolutionary history, stretching back to at least the beginning of the Jurassic Period. Like dinosaurs, plesiosaurs went extinct 65 million years ago, and no similar creature has lived on the planet since.

Plesiosaurs and other marine reptiles (such as mosasaurs) are often incorrectly called dinosaurs. Although they lived during the same time period, marine reptiles were not dinosaurs.

Geologic Timeline

Period	Epoch
NEOGENE (23 million years ago - Present)	Holocene
	Pleistocene
	Pliocene
PALEOGENE (65 million - 23 million years ago)	Miocene
	Oligocene
	Eocene
CRETACEOUS (144 million - 65million years ago)	Paleocene
	Late
	Early