



Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre

MEDIA RELEASE

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MAJOR FOSSIL DISCOVERY UNDERWAY IN MORDEN

MORDEN, Manitoba – The Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre is unearthing one of its biggest fossil finds in years.

Late in the 2009 field season, CFDC staff excavated several intriguing fossils at one of our dig sites. During the winter, our paleontologists cleaned up the specimens, and were surprised to find massive *Xiphactinus* jaw bones, with a partial mosasaur flipper wedged in between them.

Xiphactinus was a gargantuan, voracious predatory fish that lived 80 million years ago in the Western Interior Seaway, sharing the waters with mosasaurs and other marine reptiles (the dinosaur counterparts of the ocean). Based on the size of the bones collected thus far, the CFDC's newest specimen is between 18-20 feet long, making it the largest in the museum's collection of prehistoric fish fossils.

“It's quite remarkable to have the opportunity to find one fossil, and absolutely incredible when that one fossil leads to the discovery of an ancient sea monster skeleton,” said museum curator Anita Janzic.

The mosasaur fossil found alongside the *Xiphactinus* also tells a potentially revelatory story, Janzic says.

“This may suggest that *Xiphactinus* preyed upon smaller mosasaurs, not only on other fish,” she said, noting this find has the potential to have a significant scientific impact on our knowledge of these and other prehistoric creatures of the deep.

The CFDC fossil crew is now back at the site for a major excavation – 20 feet of earth has been removed thus far– slowly exposing more and more pieces of this exciting discovery, said CFDC General Manager Tyler Schroeder.

“The site is proving to be a fantastic find, with both *Xiphactinus* and mosasaur fossils present, as well as other specimens,” he said. “We'll likely be excavating at this fossil-rich spot throughout this year and possibly into next year. The Discovery Channel –

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Daily Planet film crew was filming this discovery earlier this week and they were very impressed with what we have found!”

Having a find of this magnitude this summer is fitting, since the CFDC began the 2010 field season with the goal of finding more fossils than it has in any other season of the last few decades.

“In a deliberate effort to increase our fossil hunting activities, we've recently hired an Assistant Curator and tasked him with the discovery of fossils,” Schroeder said. “Our investment in staffing is already starting to pay huge dividends for our fossil collection, and our profile within the scientific community.”

CFDC board president Henry Penner says this latest find further demonstrates the viability of building a new museum facility – something the CFDC has been striving towards for the last few years.

“It’s finds like this that continue to push the CFDC into a leading role for the collection of marine reptile fossils across the country,” he said. “Now we need a facility that’s better up to the task of presenting these spectacular finds to the public, as well as supporting our paleontologists in their scientific research.”

The Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre houses the largest collection of marine reptile fossils in Canada, including a 43-foot long mosasaur named “Bruce”, the largest mosasaur in the country. Housed in the Morden Community Centre, the CFDC is working towards building a new state-of-the-art facility in the Manitoba Escarpment.

The general public is invited to get their hands dirty at one of our fossil-rich sites through our Fossil Dig Adventure Tours this summer. More information is available at discoverfossils.com.

-30-

For more information contact:
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A press kit and filming/photo opportunities is available upon request.

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