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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

MITCHELL SCHOOLS CRAFT 100-MILLION-YEAR OLD SEA-DINOSAUR REPLICA

Most rural school metal shops fine-tune their skills on fencing tools and truck bumpers. But this spring, with the guidance of renowned California metal sculptor Larry Williams, a 100-million-year-old sea-dinosaur is coming to life again at Mitchell, Oregon.

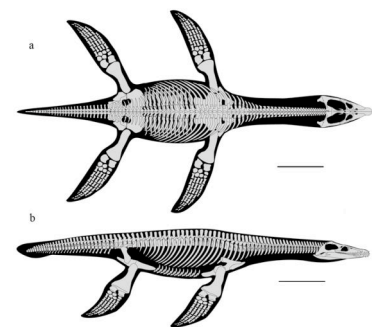
In 2003, two amateur paleontologists discovered the 2-foot-long jaw of a Plesiosaur in rocks near Prineville, Oregon. The fossil—the remains of an animal estimated at 20-24 feet in length-- was recovered under the guidance of Dr. James Martin, a plesiosaur expert at South Dakota School of Mines. The short-necked plesiosaur was among the top marine predators and fastest swimmers in the dinosaur-age oceans.

The Mitchell School welding class is crafting a half-size, 12-foot-long replica of the animal as part of a major exhibit for the Oregon PaleoLands Institute's new Field Center in Fossil, Oregon. The school has integrated the project across its science, math, writing, and ag-shop curricula.

With the help of Paleo Lands staff, the 3-5th grade is studying the ancient sea floor as part of its earth science curricula, and will help build a replica of the sea floor, and produce a book about the Mitchell plesiosaur as part of the exhibit. In mid-April, the biology class traveled to Seattle to learn about paleo-ecology, ancient ecosystems, and evolution at the Burke Museum, University of Washington, and worked with exhibit developers at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle to develop exhibit text and materials. The metal shop class is building the 12-foot-long, half-size replica of the skeleton of a similar creature, learning welding skills as well as dinosaur anatomy. "We are just thrilled to incorporate so much of the area's history and landscape into our school curricula!" said Sue Horton, Mitchell superintendent.

The school and community are also building a second Plesiosaur sculpture for display at Mitchell.

The Paleo Lands Institute exhibit is planned for completion in mid-June, with an exhibit opening at the new Field Center in Fossil on the 4th of July. Fossil discoverers Mike Kelly and Greg Kovalchuk are invited as special guests at this event. This project is funded by the Ann and Bill Swindells Charitable Trust, and coordinated by the Oregon PaleoLands Institute



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