



In The News

Current Events in Earth & Space Science

Summaries for the Classroom

Giant Turtle Fossil Bones Reunited After 163 Years

The two partial limb fossils from an ancient sea turtle fit together perfectly, despite each bone being collected 163 years apart. This discovery surprised paleontologists, as it is believed that most fossils break down after weeks or months of surface exposure.

Articles to Share with Students

DrexelNOW – Paleontologists Assemble Giant Turtle Bone From Fossil Discoveries Made Centuries Apart

<http://www.drexel.edu/now/news-media/releases/archive/2014/March/Fossil-Turtle-Puzzle/>

WHYY NewsWorks – 'Once in a lifetime' chance brings ancient turtle bones back together in Philly

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/item/66182-once-in-a-lifetime-chance-brings-ancient-turtle-bones-back-together-in-philly>

BBC News – Monster Turtle Fossil Re-United

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-26717415>

National Geographic Blog Phenomena: Laelaps - Fossil of Giant Turtle Atlantochelys Reunited With Its Other Half After 163 Years

<http://phenomena.nationalgeographic.com/2014/03/25/fossil-of-giant-turtle-atlantochelys-reunited-with-its-other-half-after-163-years/>

CBC Radio – Tuesday: Resolute Bay plane crash, Cotler poisoning, ancient sea turtle bones, and more...

<http://www.cbc.ca/asithappens/episode/2014/03/25/tuesday-resolute-bay-plane-crash-cotler-poisoning-ancient-sea-turtle-bones-and-more/>

General Information

Oceans of Kansas – Marine Turtles from the Western Interior Sea

<http://www.oceansofkansas.com/turtles.html>

ARKive – General information on turtles

<http://www.arkive.org/explore/species?q=turtle>

Smithsonian Magazine: Saving the World's Most Endangered Sea Turtle

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/saving-the-worlds-most-endangered-sea-turtle-14657081/>

Wired UK – Turtles Survived Dinosaur-Killing Extinction Event

<http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-07/12/tough-turtles>

Questions for Classroom Discussion

- Who found the first piece of the turtle bone? When and where did he find it? Who found the second piece of the turtle bone? When and where did he find it?
- What proof is there that these two bone fragments are parts of the same humerus?
- Do you think more bones from this same turtle could be found? Why/why not?
- Which modern-day turtle are scientists stating this specimen most closely represents? Do some searching to learn about this modern-day sea turtle. Do you agree with the scientists? Why/why not?
- Why do you think turtles as large as the *Atlantochelys mortoni* went extinct?
- Why do you think this turtle species has gone extinct? Explain why.
- Why is it important for museums to store fossil specimens?
- Did all turtles go extinct at the end of the Cretaceous Period, the same time all dinosaurs went extinct? If not, why do you think some turtles were able to survive?

Tags

fossil, turtle, holotype, Cretaceous Period, New Jersey, Academy of Natural Science

Compiled March 29, 2014, by L. Guertin