

NEWS

Florida Fossil Hunters



Florida Prehistorical Museum, Inc.
dba/ Florida Fossil Hunters
Volume 36, Number 3

MAY/JUN 2026

From Ye Olde President.....

Hello and welcome all FFH Members, It's May and the summer time weather is here for fossil hunting in the Peace River. FFH is working to set up future field trips and looking for a field trip coordinator. FFH will have an all meeting "fossil swap" to encourage more interactions among the members. Every member brings in fossils to talk about and swap with other members.

- **May Meeting May 16th** — Orlando Science Center. Guest speaker: John McIntosh, owner of Ancient Artifacts Store. Topic: Fossils of the Solnhofen Limestone — famous for Jurassic age fossils approximately 150 million years old
- *No FFH meeting in June at the Orlando Science Center*
- **FFH Fossil Auction & Club Barbecue — Saturday, June 20th.** Cash only fossil auction begins at 4pm Hosted at Dave & Melissa Dunaway's home — 600 Ferne Dr, Longwood, FL 32779. RSVP required — call or text Melissa at 407-461-8507
- **Peace River Field Trips:** Steve & Michael Sharpe are the Peace River field trip leaders. For updated information, check website for updates:
www.floridafossilhunters.com/peace-river-field-trips/

Thank you
Salvatore Sansone,
FFH President

FOSSIL SWAP
at each Meeting!

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

SUPPORT YOUR CLUB

Buy fossil t-shirts. Different shirts are available for adults and kids at each meeting. Cost of shirts for kids are \$20 and adults are \$25.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Saturday, May 16th

2pm Paleontology for Kids
3pm Meeting
FFH meeting at OSC

Saturday, June 20th

FFH Fossil Auction & Club
Barbecue - see time and location
in letter & page 2.

2026 Calendar of Events

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FOSSIL FAIR

October 3-4, 2026

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www.floridafossilhunters.com

MEETINGS & MORE

May 16th, OSC Meeting:

A general meeting will be held at the Orlando Science Center. **Guest speaker will be John McIntosh owner of Ancient Artifacts Store.** Topic will be about fossils of The Soinhofen Limestone. Famous for Jurassic age fossils approximately 150 million years old.

June 20th, Fossil Auction and Club Barbecue:

FFH will be having its cash only Fossil Auction and Club Barbecue, Saturday May 16th at 4pm. Come out and see our awesome items for auction. Please help support your club. No guest speaker scheduled. **Fossil auction and barbecue will be held at Dave and Melissa Dunaway's house.** We ask all FFH members to bring a covered dish. We will furnish hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill for everyone. Please call or text Melissa at 407-461-8507 to RSVP address is 600 Ferne Dr, Longwood, FL 32779. Bring your swimsuit to swim in the pool! We will have a great time with good food and fantastic fossils to bid on. I hope to see everyone participate. *There will be no FFH meeting for June at the Orlando Science Center.*

Regular Meetings are held at the Orlando Science Center. Unless otherwise noted.

Admission and parking is FREE to members. At the garage & ticket counter inform them you are there for the meeting.

At EVERY meeting!

- Support your club with the purchase of vintage fossil fair t-shirts! Variety of sizes available at meetings while they last. \$25/Adults and Kids/\$20.
- "Fossil swap": every member brings in fossils to talk about and swap.
- Paleontology for Kids has been a success and will be held before the general meetings at 2:00pm.

MEMBER REGISTRATION

<https://floridafossilhunters.com/membership>,
mail in the form on pg 7 or renew at the meeting.
MUST BE REGISTERED FOR FIELD TRIPS

PALEONTOLOGY FOR KIDS

Every OSC Meeting; 2:00-3:00pm

Kids' Fossil Blast is an informal, hands-on experience aimed at kids ages 5 to 14.

*Thank you Laura and Francesca
for your hard work and dedication to
making Paleontology for Kids a success.*

FFH 2026 June Auction List

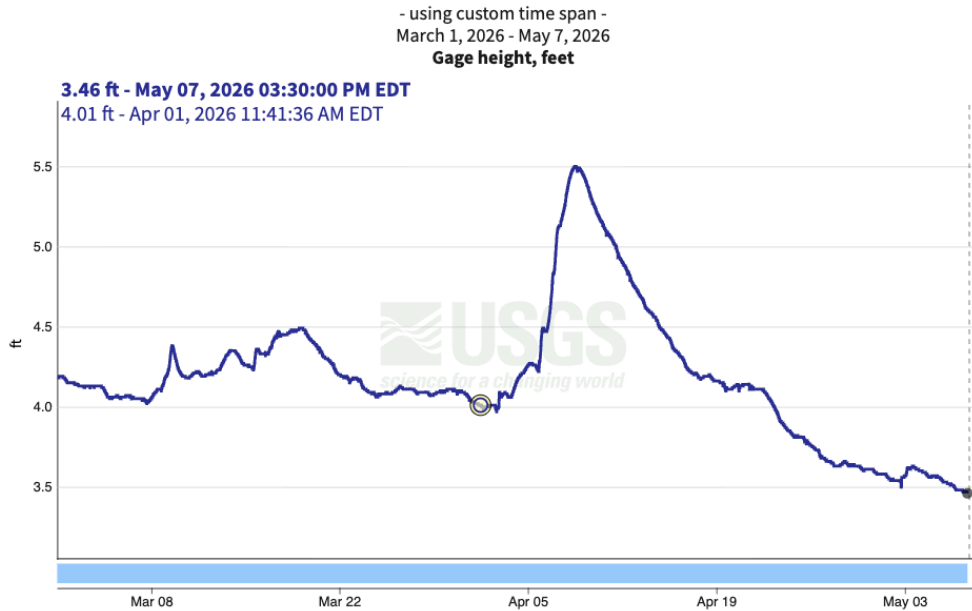
1. Petrified Fern Bud (Min. Bid \$20.00)
2. Fossil Manatee Vertebra (Min. Bid \$8.00)
3. Pyritized Brachiopod, *Paraspirifer bownockeri*
4. Brittle Star (Min. Bid \$40.00)
5. Fossil Stromatolite (Min. Bid \$20.00)
6. Trilobite (Min. Bid \$20.00)
7. Amethyst (Min. Bid \$25.00)
8. Spinosaurus Tooth (Min. Bid \$20.00)
9. Shark Tooth, *Otodus obliquus* (Min. Bid \$30.00)
10. Dolphin Tooth (Min. Bid \$15.00)
11. Partial 3-Toed Horse Jaw with 2 Teeth (Min. Bid \$10.00)
12. Alligator Scute and Tooth (Min. Bid \$15.00)
13. Sliced Ammonite (Min. Bid \$30.00)
14. Fossil Fish, *Knightia* (Min. Bid \$15.00)
15. Giant Beaver Molar (Min. Bid \$15.00)
16. Cave Bear Tooth (Min. Bid \$30.00)
17. Agatized Coral (Min. Bid \$25.00)
18. Fossil Fern (Min. Bid \$15.00)
19. Ammonite (Min. Bid \$25.00)
20. Coconut Geode (Min. Bid \$25.00)
21. Garfish Scales (Min. Bid \$25.00)

PIECE ON THE PEACE

Want the most current height? Visit floridafossilhunters.com and click on the easy Peace River Gauge button in the sidebar or under the Resources tab for the latest water level data or visit the USGS website directly.
PEACE RIVER AT US 17 AT ZOLFO SPRINGS, FL

Peace River at US 17 at Zolfo Springs, FL - USGS-02295637

[Subscribe to WaterAlert](#)



THE WOOLLY MAMMOTH IN THE COAL MINE

By Jessica Pressler | Photograph by Ivan Belaustegui/ Courtesy of Faena

Damien Hirst's gold-plated woolly mammoth, *Gone But Not Forgotten*, sits sealed in a glass coffin at the ultra-luxurious Faena Hotel in Miami Beach — a \$15 million centerpiece purchased by billionaire Len Blavatnik at a Cannes charity auction.

The irony? A creature whose extinction was likely driven by a changing climate now stands as a decorative showpiece in

a city scientists predict will be largely underwater by century's end. Rising sea levels, fueled by the same forces that once reshaped prehistoric ecosystems, threaten the very ground beneath it.

For paleontologists, the mammoth's journey is a striking one — from Ice Age giant, to ancient remains, to gilded spectacle in one of America's most climate-vulnerable cities. Whether anyone in Miami is paying attention to that symbolism is another question entirely.

Read the full article for an interesting look at luxury, denial, and one very well-dressed mammoth.

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2016/03/inside-faena-house-miami-beach.html>

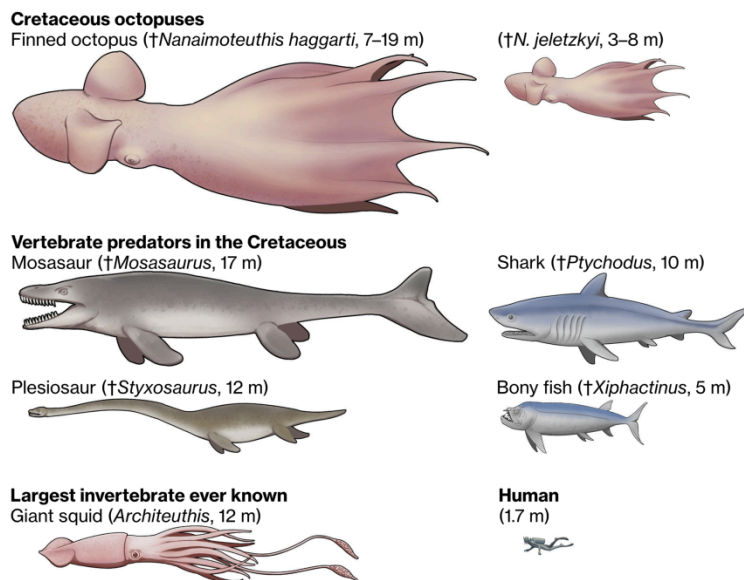


GIANT, 60-FOOT OCTOPUSES

were apex predators 100 million years ago, fossil discovery shows

Apr 23, 2026 | By Jack Guy

This diagram shows how the colossal size of Nanaimoteuthis compares with that of other animals. Hokkaido University



Giant octopuses measuring up to 62 feet (19 meters) in length were among the top ocean predators around 100 million years ago, according to new research that uncovered rare fossils hidden within solid rock.

Remarkably well-preserved specimens of the octopuses' powerful jaws show signs of intense wear from crushing hard prey including shells and bones, according to a study published in the journal *Science*.

"This suggests that these giant octopuses may have functioned as apex predators in the Cretaceous sea," study coauthor Yasuhiro Iba, an associate professor of Earth and planetary sciences at Japan's Hokkaido University, told CNN.

"We were surprised. The fossil record of octopuses is extremely limited, so finding animals this large and ecologically important in the Cretaceous ocean was beyond our expectations," he added.

The extinct animals, scientifically named *Nanaimoteuthis*, were about 23 to 62 feet (7 to 19 meters) in length. The researchers estimated their overall size by extrapolating from the size of the beak specimens.

The colossal creatures were among the earliest finned octopuses, which have paddle-shaped fins on their heads, in the scientific record, according to the study.

Rare fossil evidence of octopuses

Iba explained that octopuses rarely fossilize because most of their bodies are soft, with only a few hard parts like the jaws likely to be preserved after they die. The scientists conducted a fresh analysis of 15 huge jaw fossils previously found in Japan and Canada's Vancouver Island.

The team also unearthed 12 fossilized octopus jaws encased in sedimentary rock from the Cretaceous Period, dating back 100 million to 72 million years. The study found the specimens by using a 3D-imaging technique called grinding tomography to create high-resolution datasets, and an AI model, according to the study. Iba described the method as a "digital fossil mining" approach, which produced 3D models of the jaw fossils.

And until now, vertebrate predators such as large marine reptiles, sharks and fishes were thought to have commanded the seas, Iba said, but the fossils hint that octopuses may also have occupied the top of the food web.

"Within this ecosystem, *Nanaimoteuthis* likely used its large body and long arms to capture prey, and its powerful jaws to process hard food," Iba added. "Like modern octopuses, it may have relied on intelligence to find, capture and consume its prey."

Iba plans to expand digital fossil mining, he said: "Our goal is to reveal the hidden players of ancient

ecosystems and build a much more complete picture of how past ecosystems really worked.”

Their size suggests they were an apex predator, sat at the top of the food chain,” he said. “The authors argue that asymmetrical patterns of wear on the octopuses’ jaws points to evidence of intelligence,” Coulson added.

It would have taken the octopuses a long time to break down and ingest large animals, and they

could have met their energetic needs by feeding on relatively small prey, he explained.

“But that doesn’t take away from the fact that these were most likely formidable predators and probably a significant predator towards certain larger-bodied prey that existed back then,” Vinther said.

Full article and see more pictures:

<https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/23/science/giant-octopus-cretaceous-study-scli-intl>

Mammal ancestors laid eggs, and this 250-million-year-old fossil finally proves it

Date: April 14, 2026 | Source: University of the Witwatersrand

A 250-million-year-old fossil egg just revealed how an ancient survivor beat Earth’s deadliest extinction.

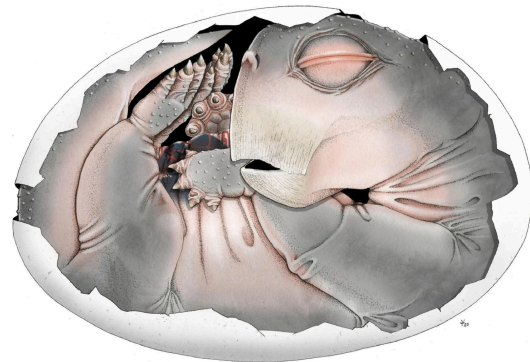
A new fossil discovery is bringing fresh insight into one of the most remarkable survival stories in Earth’s history while also resolving a scientific mystery that has puzzled researchers for decades. *Lystrosaurus*, a tough, plant-eating ancestor of mammals, became one of the dominant species after the End-Permian Mass Extinction around 252 million years ago. This event wiped out most life on the planet. Despite extreme heat, unstable conditions, and long-lasting droughts, *Lystrosaurus* not only endured but flourished.

New research published in PLOS ONE and led by international team Professor Benoit, Professor Botha, and Dr. Fernandez identified an egg containing a *Lystrosaurus* embryo that is about 250 million years old.

This fossil is the first confirmed egg ever found from a mammal ancestor. It finally answers a long-standing question about early mammal evolution. Did the ancestors of mammals lay eggs? The answer is yes.

Why These Ancient Eggs Were So Hard To Find

The researchers believe the eggs were soft-shelled, which tend to decay before they can be preserved. The discovery also goes far beyond confirming how these animals reproduced.



Lystrosaurus embryo within its partially preserved shell, reconstruction of the animal. Credit: Sophie Vrad

This fossil was discovered during a field excursion, nearly 17 years ago. At first only tiny flecks of bone were identified, soon it became clear that it was a perfectly curled-up *Lystrosaurus* hatchling.

Advanced Imaging Reveals a Hidden Embryo

With modern synchrotron x-ray CT scanning and the powerful X-rays available at the ESRF, researchers were finally able to closely examine the fossil. These tools allowed them to see inside the specimen in remarkable detail and uncovered important clues about the embryo’s development.

“When I saw the incomplete mandibular symphysis, I was genuinely excited,” says Professor Benoit.

"The mandible, the lower jaw, is made up of two halves that must fuse before the animal can feed. The fact that this fusion had not yet occurred shows that the individual would have been incapable of feeding itself."

Large Eggs and Fast-Developing Young

The study shows that *Lystrosaurus* produced relatively large eggs compared to its body size. This suggests that *Lystrosaurus* did not feed its young with milk like modern mammals do. The findings indicate that *Lystrosaurus* hatchlings were likely precocial, meaning they were born at an advanced stage of development. These young animals would have been able to feed themselves, avoid predators, and reach maturity quickly. In simple terms, *Lystrosaurus* thrived by growing fast and reproducing early.

A Winning Strategy in a Harsh World

In the challenging conditions that followed the extinction, this approach proved highly effective. The discovery provides the first direct evidence that mammal ancestors laid eggs and also helps explain why *Lystrosaurus* became so successful in post-extinction ecosystems. Survival during

extreme global crises depends on adaptability, resilience, and reproductive strategy. *Lystrosaurus* appears to have combined all three.

From the Researchers

- This discovery provides the first direct fossil evidence that mammal ancestors like *Lystrosaurus* laid large, yolk-rich eggs — resolving a question that has puzzled paleontologists for over 150 years.
- Their egg-laying strategy likely contributed to their survival after the devastating end-Permian mass extinction, producing resilient young capable of thriving in harsh, unpredictable conditions.
- The findings offer a deep-time perspective on adaptability during ecological crisis, with important implications for understanding how species today may respond to rapid climate change and environmental stress.

Read the full article here: *University of the Witwatersrand. "Mammal ancestors laid eggs, and this 250-million-year-old fossil finally proves it." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 14 April 2026.*

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2026/04/260414075642.htm

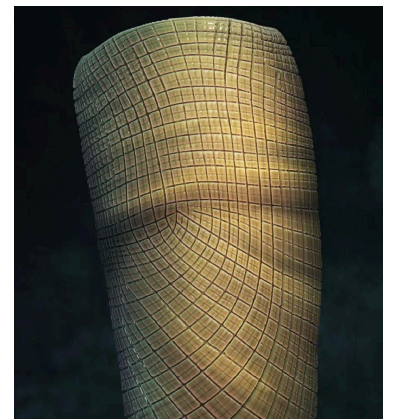
Scientists just solved a 160-million-year fossil mystery “I’ve never seen anything like it”

Date: April 15, 2026 | Source: Virginia Tech

Image: A recently discovered 550-million-year-old sea sponge is helping solve a long-standing evolutionary mystery about why early sponges seemed to vanish from the fossil record. Credit: Xunlai Yuan

A rare fossil discovery is shedding light on the “missing years” of early sponge evolution. Scientists found a 550-million-year-old sponge that likely lacked hard skeletal parts, explaining why earlier fossils are so scarce. This supports the idea that the earliest sponges were soft-bodied and rarely preserved. The finding changes how researchers hunt for the origins of animal life.

Read the full article here: *Virginia Tech. "Scientists just solved a 160-million-year fossil mystery “I’ve never seen anything like it”." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 15 April 2026. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2026/04/260415011643.htm*



FLORIDA FOSSIL HUNTERS

is a fun and educational group whose goal is to further our understanding of the prehistory of Florida. We encourage family participation and welcome explorers of all ages.

Membership options are listed to the right.

Meetings are usually held on the third Saturday of the month but may vary with club activities. Check the website for the date and location of the next meeting or call one of the officers.

Officers:

President	Salvatore Sansone	(321) 278-9294
Vice President	Steve Sharpe	(352) 552-2296
Secretary	Melissa Dunaway	(407) 461-8507
Treasurer	David Dunaway	(407) 786-8844

Chairs:

Field Trips	OPEN	
Fossil Fair	Valerie First	(407) 699-9274
Fossil Auctions	Dave Dunaway	(407) 786-8844
Fossil Bucks	Dave Dunaway	(407) 786-8844
Fossil Lotto	Ed Metrin	(407) 321-7462
Membership	Ken Sellers	
Newsletter	Elise Cronin-Hurley, info@elisech.com	
Photography	John Heinsen	(407) 291-7672
Facebook	Salvatore Sansone Ken Sellers	
Webmaster	Elise Cronin-Hurley, info@elisech.com	

Board of Directors:

Joyce Bittle	(407) 341-6366
Melissa Dunaway	(407) 461-8507
Marge Fantozi	(407) 256-5566
Valerie First	(407) 699-9274
Ed Metrin	(407) 321-7462
Ken Sellers	(407) 457-4117

*Florida Prehistorical Museum, Inc.
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Membership Application

MAIL in this form or Register ONLINE at www.floridafossilhunters.com/membership

Name:			
Associate Members			
Address:			
Phone:			
Email:			
<input type="checkbox"/>	New	<input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal
Please list any interests, experience, talents or just plain enthusiasm, which you would like to offer to the club:			

Family membership: \$25
Individual membership: \$20

Please make your checks payable to:

Florida Fossil Hunters
Post Office Box 540404
Orlando, Florida 32854-0404

Associate members are people in the same household, included at no extra charge, 2 adult votes per household with Family Membership. Per our insurance policy, family membership covers married couples and children. All other individuals must have separate individual membership to be covered by our club insurance.

Membership year runs from January to December.

Newsletter Policy

Articles must be submitted two weeks before publication date. to be considered for an issue. Emailed to: info@floridafossilhunters.com. Articles can be sent either as text in the email, in a google doc, or in Microsoft Word files (.docx). Please note in subject of email 'FFH News: [article or info]

Florida Fossil Hunters Meetings & Events

MARK YOUR 2026 CALENDAR

Meetings 3pm at OSC | Paleontology for Kids at 2pm and alternative time and location noted when applicable.

May 16, 2026, Meeting

Guest speaker: John McIntosh,
owner of Ancient Artifacts Store.

*Topic: Fossils of the Solnhofen
Limestone*

June 20, 2026, Meeting

FFH Fossil Auction &
Club Barbecue

July 18, 2026, Meeting

August 15, 2026, Meeting

September 26, 2026, Meeting

No October Meeting

November 21, 2026, Meeting

December date tba,
FFH Annual Christmas Party
and Fossil Bucks Auction

2026 Fossil Fair
October 3-4th

SEE INSIDE

for more information on events



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