

Nevada marine reptile from 240 million years ago identified

By Frank X. Mullen, Reno Gazette-Journal

Scientists have identified a new type of marine reptile, which 240 million years ago roamed the sea that became the Nevada desert.

Judging by the size and sharpness of its teeth, the recently-discovered ichthyosaur was a fierce predator that ate various prey including his fellow fish-lizards, researchers said. When the find was reported at a conference in England in September, Science News said the specimen could be the “T-Rex of the seas.”

Nadia Frobisch, a vertebrate paleontologist at the University of Chicago, and her team unearthed the fossil in the Augusta Mountains of central Nevada in 2008 and are studying it. She said ichthyosaurs, Nevada’s state fossil, have been dug up in the region for decades, but the recent specimen is bigger than a killer whale and may be a new species or even a new genus.

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