

Diving for Dinos

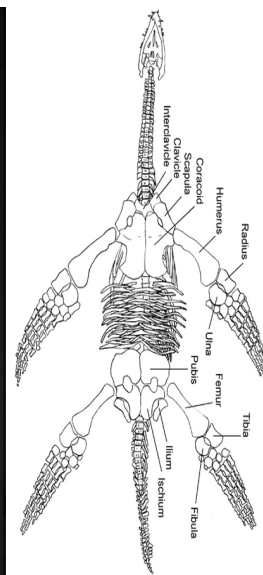
University paleontologist Dr. Martin Becker studies fossil shark teeth and fish, so it's no surprise that he is growing gills so-to-speak. Marty's recent expedition to one of his usual Arkansas fossil sites, was not the usual *dig*, it was to *dive* a murky river to excavate an enigma of underwater marine-fossils. His ability to *read the rocks* led him beyond the predictable dig sites and areas of development to this aqueous outcrop; his enthusiasm and capability was met with reward. With scuba gear and a sledge, Marty's vested interest in fossils has made him a pioneer of paleontology in this new venue of *diving for dinos*. Marty's finds from thirty-three feet down included several well preserved turtle bones and an assortment of shark teeth. But the crown jewel and considered among rarest of ancient reptilian fossils is his second (not first) plesiosaur vertebrae!



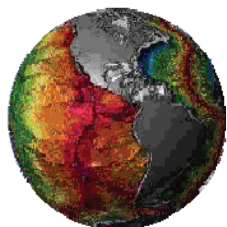
Dr. Becker and research associate showcasing the plesiosaur vertebrae.

Plesiosaur's were long-bodied carnivorous marine predators which lived in the late cretaceous. If they were still living, scuba diving would be risky to say the least. This undisclosed fossil locality has proven highly valuable scientifically and through Marty's commitment,

these fossils are now "home" in his paleo-lab where he is delicately exhuming the nearly complete vertebrae out of the host rock. These exquisite specimens are getting their deserved attention as Marty is now working on the foundations of several future publications.



ENV. SCI. LABORATORY TECHNICIAN



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ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
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As an expression of our growing student enrollment and research demand, we've recently hired a full-time Laboratory Technician. Please welcome Mike DaSilva who officially started in September after working at the American Museum of Natural History as Scientific Assistant for the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Petrology. Mike brings much teaching and analytical-instrumentation experience cultured during his

years in graduate school and at AMNH. His contributions to our department are diverse; whether it be calibrating and running instruments, bridging student-faculty research, preparing various laboratory exercises, or advising students directly in research. Mike's enthusiasm and commitment to the high standards expected of Environmental Science have been recognized as we continue to build our program.

