

Scientists study early and late mosasaurs

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Scientists say a lizard whose fossilized bones were found near Dallas 16 years ago is a missing link to extinct swimming reptiles known as mosasaurs.

The ancient lizard, named *Dallasaurus turneri*, measured three feet long and lived 92 million years ago in shallow seas that covered what is now Texas, National Geographic News reported.

Researchers say *Dallasaurus* is unusual because it had tiny feet and hands used for walking on land. Later mosasaurs developed fin-like limbs and eventually dominated the seas at the time when dinosaurs ruled the land.

"This study paints a much more complex picture of the evolution of (mosasaurs) than previously thought," said Michael Polcyn, a paleontologist at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

The later mosasaurs grew as large as their dinosaur brethren, some reaching up to 45 feet in length, National Geographic News said. The *Dallasaurus* lineage later produced the prognathodon, a fearsome marine reptile that Polcyn calls "the T. Rex of the sea."

Polcyn led the research, which is reported this month in the Netherlands Journal of Geosciences.

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