

Oil sands digger uncovers dinosaur

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A large excavator loads a truck with oil sands in 2009. A heavy equipment operator unearthed what appears to be a nearly complete plesiosaur while digging in Canada's oil sands, Syncrude announced Thursday.

A heavy equipment operator unearthed what appears to be a nearly complete plesiosaur while digging in Canada's oil sands, Syncrude announced Thursday.

The fossil was discovered on November 14 and is now being examined by Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology scientists who aim to have it removed by the end of the week, the company said in a statement.

"This is a very rare find," said the museum's Don Brinkman. "It's a long necked [plesiosaur](#), which is a [marine reptile](#) with a very long neck, small head and short body.

"The last one that was recovered was 10 years ago; it was recognized as a

new kind and given the name Wapuskanectes."

When she discovered the bones, operator Maggy Horvath said she immediately stopped digging and told a Syncrude geologist who works with the Royal Tyrrell on fossil discoveries.

"It felt pretty good to call my son and let him know that I found a prehistoric fossil while working in the mine," she said.

Canada's [oil sands](#) are the third-largest oil reserve in the world, located in an area that was once part of a prehistoric sea.

This is the 10th fossil to be discovered on Syncrude leases. The last one found in 2000 was 110 million years old and declared to be one of the most complete Cretaceous [Ichthyosaurs](#) of its age ever discovered in North America.

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