

Fossilized turtle excavated in New Mexico (Update)

November 3 2014

Fossilized remains of a turtle believed to have lived in a swampy environment tens of millions of years ago were recovered from a desert location in New Mexico.

A team from the New Mexico Museum of Natural History excavated the find on federal property near the city of Truth or Consequences last week, the Las Cruces Sun-News reported Sunday.

The team first scoured ground at the site for loose pieces of fossilized bone and turtle shell, which were placed in bags.

Members then carefully dug around the bulk of the fossilized turtle and applied plaster to keep the remains intact while it's transported back to the museum in Albuquerque for display.

The remains were spotted by resident Jeff Dornbusch, who had noticed a pile of rocks while he was hiking in the area. The rocks turned out to be fragments from the turtle fossil.

"I never really knew this area as a place for marine fossils—shells and stuff in the mountains," he said.

Dornbusch alerted a U.S. Bureau of Land Management scientist about the fossils, which were found, ironically, about 6 miles (9 kilometers) east of Turtleback Mountain, a peak near Truth or Consequences.

Tom Suazo, fossil preparer for the museum, said the landscape would have looked much different tens of millions of years ago than today.

"Basically, what this is a swampy, near-shore environment," said Suazo, who helped excavate the site last week.

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