

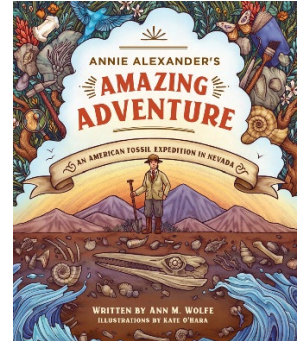
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MEET THE UNSUNG HEROINE OF PALEONTOLOGY: ANNIE ALEXANDER

Sea Dragons of Nevada: A Timeline of Discovery, Art and Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art

Deep Time: Sea Dragons of Nevada

September 7, 2024 through January 11, 2026

Reno, Nevada (update July 31, 2024) — In 1905, paleontologist Annie Alexander embarked on an expedition to Nevada's Humboldt Range in search of fossils from Earth's distant past. She traveled with a team of paleontologists from UC Berkeley and excavated 25 ichthyosaur fossil specimens, some of the largest and most complete specimens of their kind ever discovered in North America.

At the time of her journey, Alexander still didn't have the right to vote. In 1905, female paleontologists were rare, yet Alexander is part of a legacy of groundbreaking women scientists, including Mary Anning, who discovered the first ichthyosaur fossil specimen in 1811 in Great Britain. Like Annie Alexander, Anning also went unacknowledged for many years by the scientific community.

In *Deep Time: Sea Dragons of Nevada*, a new exhibition opening Sept. 7, 2024, the Nevada Museum of Art honors Alexander's underrecognized contributions to paleontology. Spanning 9,000 square feet, the exhibition combines science and history with art and design to present the world's largest gathering of giant ichthyosaur fossils, relating the story of ichthyosaur discovery in Nevada and around the world. On view will be photographs of Alexander, sample pages from her field scrapbook, some personal effects including her hiking boots, and many of the original fossils she helped excavate in the Humboldt Range on loan from the UC Berkeley Museum of Paleontology.

Alexander helped establish two research museums: the Museum of Paleontology and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, both at UC Berkeley. In *Deep Time* co-curators Ann M. Wolfe, Andrea and John C. Deane Chief Curator at the Nevada Museum of Art and lead paleontologist Dr. Martin Sander honor her contributions and tell the story of the rise and fall of the ichthyosaur.

The exhibition is the largest gathering of giant ichthyosaur fossils assembled under one roof. Highlights of the exhibition include:

- Recently discovered fossils from the newest ichthyosaur species, *Cymbospondylus youngorum*, excavated in the Augusta Mountains of Nevada.
- Fossils, photographs and field journal pages from the 1905 Saurian expedition to Nevada's Humboldt Range.
- Fossils excavated from the quarry known today as Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Historic Park.
- The story of fossil hunter Mary Anning, the first woman to discover an ichthyosaur fossil in Great Britain in 1811.
- Striking examples of paleoart, revealing how artists and scientists have long worked together to imagine the world's prehistoric marine creatures.
- One of the nation's largest collections of vintage prehistoric animal toys amassed by Jack Arata after visiting the ichthyosaur fossils in Berlin, Nevada as a young boy in the 1950s.

A NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK

On the occasion of the exhibition, the Museum will publish a children's book celebrating women in science by honoring the achievements of Annie Alexander. *Annie Alexander's Amazing Adventure: An American Fossil Expedition in Nevada* is written by Ann M. Wolfe with illustrations by Nevada-based artist Kate O'Hara. The story follows the journey of Alexander as she embarks from her home in California on a trip to the faraway desert mountains of Nevada in search of fossils. Through brilliant and colorful illustrations, readers learn about the plants and animals of the desert environment, ichthyosaur fossil discoveries and excavation, and extinction and climate change. A brief biography of Alexander is also included and serves as a teaching tool for STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) educators.

Deep Time is inspired by a thesis on *gigantism* introduced in 2024 by Dr. Martin Sander, Professor of Vertebrate Paleontology at University of Bonn, Germany. Dr. Sander travels to rural Nevada annually to study and excavate fossil beds containing the prehistoric ichthyosaur. Certain species were larger than a locomotive and are considered by some to be the largest reptiles to have ever lived on Earth. Ichthyosaur eyes measured nearly a foot in diameter, the largest of any vertebrate animal. The ichthyosaur, meaning "fish-lizard" in Greek, inhabited prehistoric seas for 160 million years before extinction.

Guests begin a time traveling journey via a room-sized light installation, titled *Swell*, by contemporary artist Anthony McCall. In the main gallery, guests encounter displays representing Nevada mountain ranges, discovering over 20 fossil specimens excavated between 1868 and 2022. Featured within the exhibition is an impressive full-size visualization of an ichthyosaur that reacts to human movement and presence created by Los Angeles-based digital technologist and animator Ivan Cruz.

Fossil specimens are on loan from the collections of the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County, with permission from the Bureau of Land Management; University of California Museum of Paleontology at Berkeley; Cincinnati Museum Center; Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology; California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco; Natural History Museum of Utah; and the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas.

Deep Time is co-curated by Ann M. Wolfe, the Museum's Chief Curator, along with lead paleontologist Dr. Martin Sander. It is designed by award-winning exhibition designer Nik Hafermaas of Berlin, Germany.

This year-long exhibit builds anticipation for the March, 2025 opening of the Museum's Charles and Stacie Mathewson Education + Research Center. In addition to increasing the galleries dedicated to permanent collections, the expansion will grant additional access to the Museum's extensive art, archive and library collections through a renovated and expanded Center for Art + Environment. The Center for Art + Environment is an internationally recognized research center promoting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environment.

RESOURCES

See a video of Dr. Sander's 2023 Nevada expedition:

- YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvgOsb3kTIY>

Full digital press kit:

- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16dSMhlpZNTh0f2tf8Z8k7NclkQia6qeD?usp=sharing>

SPONSORS

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The Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the statewide institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Great Basin Native Artists Archive, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at nevadaart.org.

Land Acknowledgement

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western Shoshone), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 27 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.