



Fish story, with proof

Modern Isaac Waltons capture prize fish, take them to their favorite taxidermist and in a few weeks have a beautifully mounted most life-like specimen ready for exhibition. J. Willis Stovall, assistant professor of paleontology at the University of Oklahoma, passes the lazy fishing stream by and digs for his fish, which died eighty million years ago, in the rock gullies of Texas. Weeks of painstaking work digging the soft, almost rotten bones from the Austin chalk were only the beginning for Stovall and his assistant Llewellyn I. Price. «Price did a wonderful piece of work in restoring the skeleton,» Stovall said. «Although there is probably one skeleton more complete than this, none has been better prepared for exhibit.» As soon as the flint-like bones were collected the task of mounting them loomed as the biggest undertaking since great scientific accuracy was necessary in their preparation. On the wall of the geological museum at the university there now is mounted the completed skeleton of probably the largest species of bony fish that ever lived. This specimen, which was restored by Price under the direction of Stovall, measures twelve feet, two inches along the curved vertebral column although some specimens measure twenty or more feet. Living, the animal would have weighed 1200 pounds. «Xiphactinus which means saber-rod, was found in the Austin chalk about forty miles north of Dallas, Texas on the farm of Roy Williams,» Mr Stovall explained. «The beast was doubtless a powerful, ferocious and predatory killer and was probably a match for many of the giant reptiles that swam the same seas. During the Cretaceous times, the Gulf of Mexico extended as far north as Kansas. Living in that sea and ranging widely in England, France, Belgium, Bohemia, Saxony and Queensland, Australia with these giant fish were the great sea-going reptiles the Monosaurs, Plesiosaurs, and turtles. The waters were alive with micro-organisms for the Austin chalk has the fossilized remains of millions of one-celled animals forming a large percentage of its mass. Among the larger invertebrates were the giant Ammonites, many Pelecypods and Gastropods. On the land giant dinosaurs and early mammals were having a struggle for existence,» the paleontologist said

