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MARINE CORPS AIR STATION  
EL TORO (SANTA ANA), CALIFORNIA 92709-5001

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MCAS EL TORO  
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AUG 18 1985

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Bill [unclear]

From: Commanding General, Marine Corps Air Station El Toro  
To: Commander, Western Division, Naval Facilities Engineering  
Command, P.O. Box 727, San Bruno, CA 94066-0720  
(Code 114)

Subj: FOSSIL FIND AT MCAS EL TORO

Encl: (1) Copy of News Article, Irvine World News, 11 July 1985

1. The enclosure is a copy of a news article from a local newspaper. It is forwarded for information and consideration in future Environmental Assessments for this Station.

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By direction

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# 'Oldest fossil' found at excavation site

By Dave A. Dickstein  
Staff writer

Perhaps the oldest fossil found on Irvine Ranch land was discovered during construction of a reservoir at the east side of the El Toro Marine Base.

The find was made a year ago but because of potential disruption by outsiders, wasn't made public until Monday's board meeting of the Irvine

Ranch Water District. At the meeting, a whale's vertebra the size of a football was passed around to the audience and IRWD board members, who learned of the discovery last July.

The whale, estimated as being 80 percent complete, has been calculated at between 20 and 25 million years old.

"That makes it safe to say this is the oldest whale found in Orange County and must be one of the oldest fossils found in

Irvine," said paleontologist Rod Raschke, whose Mission Viejo consulting firm was used during the reservoir construction.

The whale has been donated by the IRWD to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, where, if funds are available, it will be researched further. Had the fossils been given to the Orange County Natural History Museum,

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IRVINE WORLD NEWS  
11 JULY 1985

## Ancient whale fossil found near reservoir

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the whale would have beat out a 15 million-year-old camel as the oldest mammal in the Newport Beach facility, according to a museum spokeswoman.

The discovery was made when archaeologists and paleontologists were monitoring the reservoir construction site as required by law when the natural environment is being developed. After finding small shark teeth and part of a bird's skull—also estimated as from the Miocene Age, a scientific name for the period 5 to 24 million years ago—a tractor uncovered the whale 35 feet down.

Raschke's partner, Diane Weir, who was watching the tractor's activity, immediately closed off the area from further construction.

Initially, the paleontologists found skull parts, at least one arm and a fair portion of the spinal column. Through extensive digging and scraping and the delicate process of bringing out the whale, it was learned the fossils belonged to a whale nearly 80 percent complete.

"The whale will probably

never be displayed," Raschke said. "If enough of the skull is found, then maybe, but it is good more for research than for display."

The location of the major discovery was kept from public knowledge until developers and scientists were through working, said Raschke, whose company was contracted by LSA, an

**'This whale won't be displayed; its is good more for research than for display.'**

environment consulting firm based in Newport Beach which, in turn, was hired by the IRWD.

The water district has allowed the paleontologists access to the reservoir site on a voluntary basis. Citing an additional three years' worth of study in the area, Raschke has asked the exact location not be revealed.

The aluminum domed 2.5 million gallon reservoir, which became operational on July 3, is serving a portion of the new Irvine Industrial Center East and will serve El Toro Marine Base housing later this summer.