

## NATION

## Fossil fetus affirms live dinosaur birth



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This handout photo provided by the journal Science shows the detail of a Polycotylus latippinus' embryo. The giant reptile was pregnant when she died more than 70 million years ago, according to a new analysis of the remains, which offers the first proof that plesiosaur gave birth to live young.

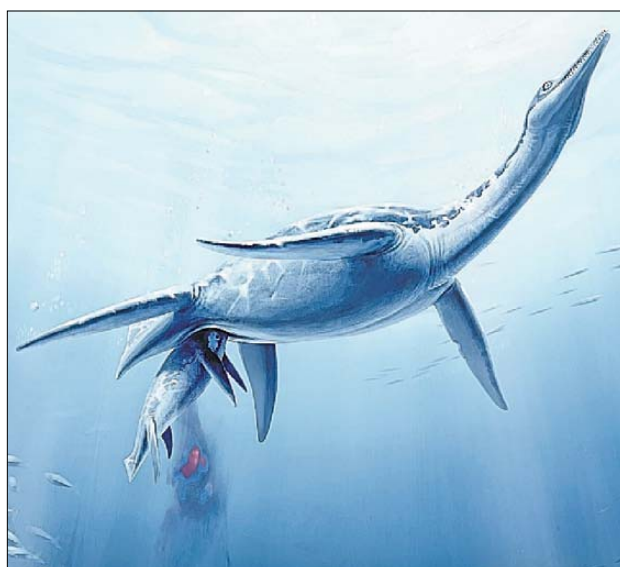
By Randolph E. Schmid  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The remains of a giant sea creature are providing the first proof that these prehistoric reptiles gave birth to their young rather than laying eggs.

Plesiosaurs, which lived at the time of dinosaurs, were large carnivorous sea animals with broad bodies and two pairs of flippers. Researchers have long questioned whether they would have been able to crawl onto land and lay eggs like other reptiles or gave birth in the water like whales.

"This is the first evidence of live birth in plesiosaurs — an exciting find," said geology professor Judy A. Massare of the State University of New York, Brockport, who was not part of the research team.

The newly unveiled fossil was originally discovered in 1987 in Logan County, Kansas. Encased in rock, it had been stored in the basement of the Nat-



S. ABRAMOWICZ / ASSOCIATED PRESS

A life reconstruction of the plesiosaur Polycotylus latippinus giving birth to a single, large young.

ural History Museum of Los Angeles County until resources were available to separate the bones for display at the museum.

F. Robin O'Keefe of Marshall University in Huntington, W. Va., and the museum's Luis Chiappe uncovered the bones of an adult plesiosaur and the remains of a fetus in-

side her.

The museum dated the fossil, which is more than 15 feet long, to between 72 million and 78 million years ago.

The researchers report on their analysis of the pregnant plesiosaur in today's edition of the journal Science.

There had been evi-

dence of live births in an ancestor of plesiosaurs. But the lack of proof for plesiosaur birth has been puzzling, said R. Ewan Fordyce, head of the geology department at the University of Otago, New Zealand, who was not involved in the research.

Fordyce said the researchers do a good job showing "that this is a fetus and not a young animal that has been eaten."

He said it was the right size for a fetus and in the right place, and there's no sign that it had been eaten and digested.

Anthony Russell of the biological science department at the University of Calgary, Canada, called the find "significant."

In their paper, O'Keefe and Chiappe suggest a parallel between plesiosaurs and modern whales, also large animals that give birth to relatively big offspring.

Like whales, they said, plesiosaurs may have formed social groups and tended their young.

## Four Atlantic storm systems may stir up hurricane season

By Brian K. Sullivan  
Bloomberg News

Four weather systems in the Atlantic are being monitored by meteorologists, including a large area of disturbance off West Africa, that may signal the start of the most active part of the annual hurricane season.

The National Hurricane Center also is watching the remains of Tropical Storm Emily, now about 630 miles south-southeast of Newfoundland.

"Next week looks to be an active one with possibly two storms, one of which

could represent a threat to the East Coast," said Jim Rouiller, senior energy meteorologist at Planalytics Inc. in Berwyn, Pa.

Aug. 20 marks the start of the busiest part of the June 1-through-Nov. 30 Atlantic hurricane season.

The Atlantic is usually at its warmest in late August, while there's less wind shear that can tear storms apart, and the jet stream has moved farther north, said Paul Walker, a senior meteorologist at AccuWeather Inc. in State College, Pa.

At this time of year, storms tend to form from the

Cape Verde Islands off Africa to the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean.

The hurricane center is watching a system about 550 miles west of the southern tip of the islands that has a 30 percent chance of becoming a tropical storm.

Another area about 450 miles southeast of Cape Verde has a 10 percent chance, the center said.

A fourth area extending from the eastern Gulf across the Florida peninsula into the Atlantic for several hundred miles has a 10 percent chance, the center said.

## Federal subsidies for small airlines caused big scuffle

By Kevin Begos  
and Adrian Sainz  
Associated Press

On some days, the pilots with Great Lakes Airlines fire up a twin-engine Beechcraft 1900 at the Ely, Nev., airport and depart for Las Vegas without a single passenger on board. And the federal government pays them to do it.

Federal statistics reviewed by The Associated Press show that in 2010, just 227 passengers flew out of Ely while the airline got \$1.8 million in subsidies.

Ely is one of 153 rural

communities where airlines get subsidies through the \$200 million Essential Air Service program, and one of 13 that critics say should be eliminated from it. Some call the spending a boondoggle, but others see it as a critical financial lifeline to ensure economic stability in rural areas.

The fight over the subsidies was a key sticking point that led to the recent political standoff in Washington that temporarily shut down the Federal Aviation Administration, putting thousands out of work for nearly two weeks. There were other disputes

as well, such as a GOP proposal that would make it more difficult for airline workers to unionize.

Republicans got the EAS cuts they were looking for in last week's agreement — but with a major caveat. Subsidies to Ely and 12 other communities are set to end, but Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has the authority to continue them if he decides it's necessary.

The EAS was created to ensure service on less profitable routes to remote communities when airlines were deregulated in 1978.

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## New gun bill reveals 'ALEC' momentum

By Alison Fitzgerald  
Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — In coming months, state legislators are likely to find a bill crossing their desks that requires law enforcement agencies to auction guns confiscated in crimes rather than destroy them, as many do now.

The proposal is the brainchild of the National Rifle Association, and it was adopted last week by a task force at the annual meeting of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a Republican-leaning policy group that brings together state lawmakers, advocacy groups and corporations to write model legislation.

"ALEC has, for the last 40 years, been incredibly influential in advancing pro-corporate legislation in the states," said Douglas Clopp, deputy director for programs at Common Cause, a Washington-

based policy group.

"Given the results of the 2010 midterm elections, many states are now one-party controlled, Republican legislatures. Once ALEC model legislation is introduced, there is really no opposition, and little public debate, before the legislation is enacted as law," Clopp said.

Iowa state Rep. Linda Upmeyer, a Republican who sits on ALEC's board, disputes that. After an ALEC-drafted model bill is introduced in the state legislatures, it still has to be debated before it becomes law, she said.

"There is no voice getting shut out of the process."

ALEC takes credit for the similarly worded laws or proposals aimed at curbing the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to limit carbon emissions and block implementation of President Barack Obama's health care law.

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