



□ The recently-found fossilised mosasaur teeth with a 50mm rule for scale.

Scientists get their teeth into Kotemaori fossil find

RESEARCHERS have found an ancient fossil in a Hawke's Bay forest with local Department of Conservation biodiversity ranger Helen Jonas one of the team which discovered it.

The jagged teeth of a hefty predator that lived in our waters 80 million years ago have been discovered in the Maungataniwha Native Forest, inland of Kotemaori.

The remains of a mosasaur, a large marine reptile that was a dominant predator towards the end of the Cretaceous period, have since been identified by GNS Science experts.

The scientists said the teeth came from a "nasty" predator with a bad attitude.

The creature has been identified as a mosasaur but the exact species is yet to be determined.

The mosasaur could be likened to a crocodile with a snake-like body and paddle-like appendages.

It is believed to have lived only in water.

Ms Jonas and the team were conducting

a search for whio, the blue duck, up a small stream and spotted a rock with a lump of bone in it.

Ms Jonas was keen to see if the bone extended through the rock so search partner Forest Lifeforce Restoration Trust manager Pete Shaw jumped into the water and levered the rock loose with a branch.

While in the pool Mr Shaw felt something rough and lifted another rock out of the water which contained the fossilised jaw fragment.

Mr Shaw said there was great jubilation at that point.

While mosasaur fossils have been found before in New Zealand, including the Maungataniwha forest area, they are not particularly common.

GNS Science collections manager John Simes said he hoped to have a medical CT scan done of the fragment in order to create a digital 3D model of the teeth, most of which remained hidden in the rock.