

Xiphactinus

Common Name:

Cretaceous Bull-dog tarpon

Classification:

Class: Actinopterygii

Order: Ichthyodectiformes

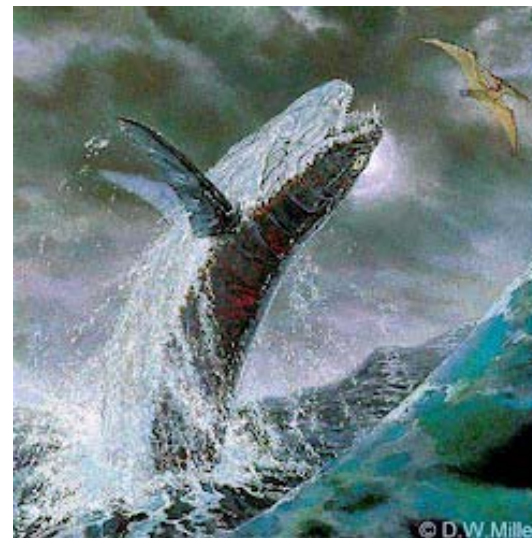
Family: Ichthyodectidae

Description:

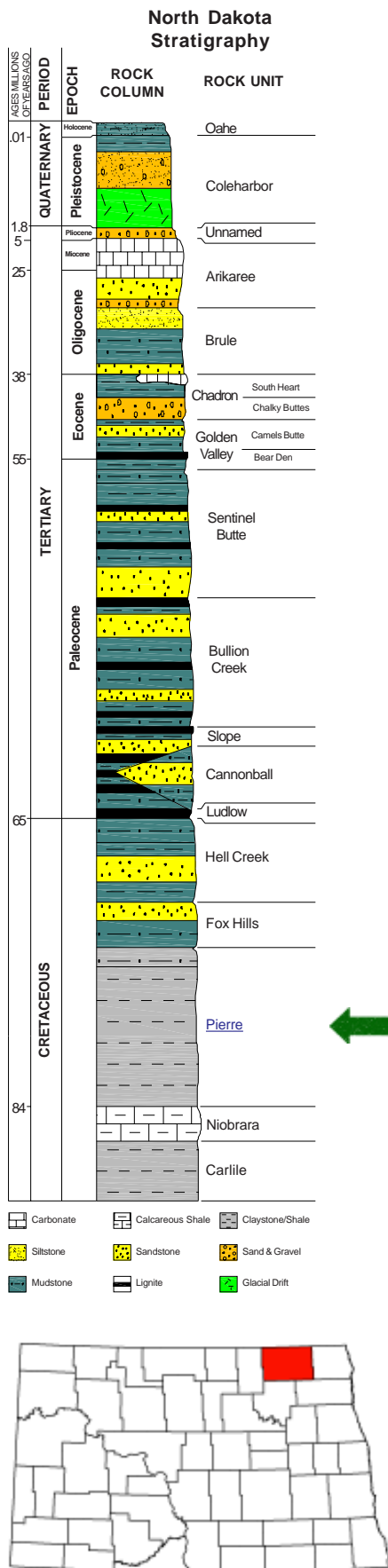
The tarpon-like fish, *Xiphactinus*, were among the largest fish that inhabited the Pierre Sea. They grew to lengths of 18 feet. Their large size, long bodies, powerful tails, and bulldog-like jaws suggest that they were efficient predators. *Xiphactinus* had large fangs at the front of the mouth probably used to strike or impale prey during the initial attack.



Xiphactinus swimming in the Late Cretaceous Pierre Sea. Painting by, and courtesy of, Dan Varner.



Xiphactinus breaking water in the Western Interior Seaway. Painting by, and courtesy of, D. W. Miller.



Locations where fossils have been found

ND State Fossil Collection

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