

JOIN A DIG

In 2002, paleontologist Mike Everhart came across a wonderful discovery. Here is his story about what happened that day.

We were on a field trip to the Smoky Hill Chalk in Kansas. I decided to search the lower—and somewhat older—gray chalk flats. When I looked down, I noticed a funny looking, rust-orange lump. Then I saw six teeth. From the size of the teeth, I could tell I had found the remains of a large shark. A shark like this had been on my wish list for years.

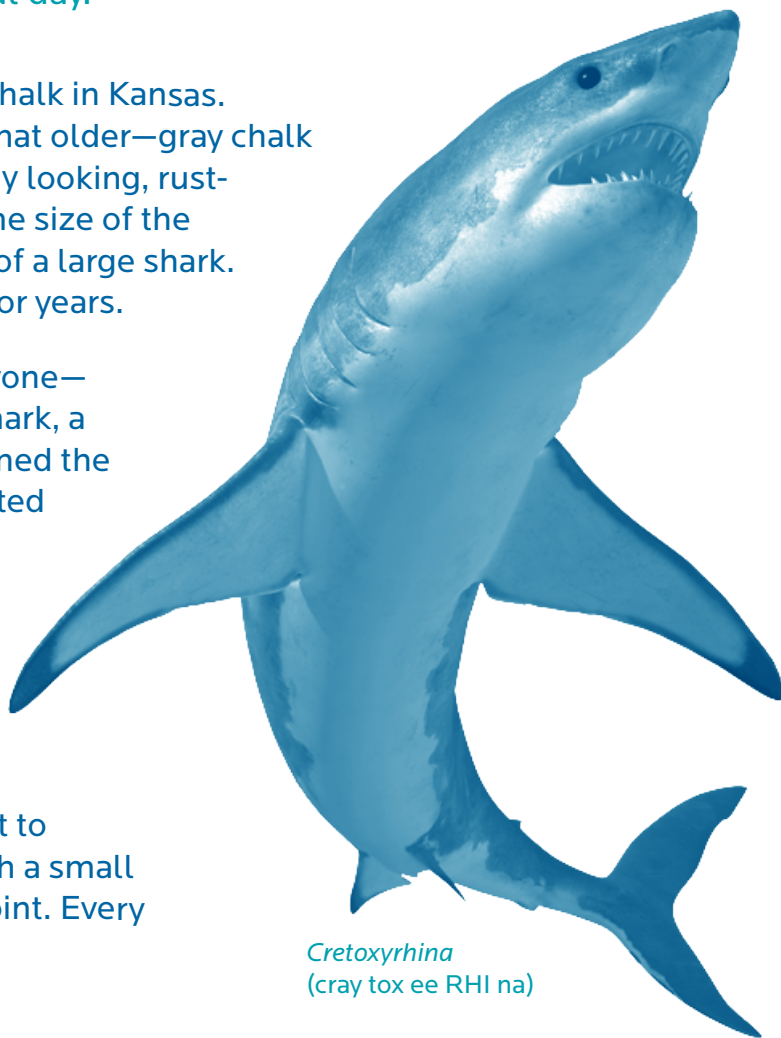
I got my camera out to take pictures. Everyone—including me—was in awe. It was a huge shark, a *Cretoxyrhina mantelli*, which I had nicknamed the “Ginsu” shark. I got out my field map, plotted the location, and checked it against the GPS data.

Time to start the excavation. First, I used a large pick and shovel. Then I got down on my hands and knees to work closer to the skeleton. I had to work very carefully because I didn’t want to damage the fossil. I removed the chalk with a small knife and an ice pick that has a very fine point. Every so often, I cleared away the bits of chalk with a small brush.

After a few hours, we had exposed the front 16 feet of a 20-foot shark. I made drawings in my notebook to show where each piece was found.

Now that the remains were exposed, we had to protect them. We used wet paper towels to pad the skull. Then we made a protective jacket for the skull out of burlap dipped in plaster. We waited for the plaster to dry and then loaded the jacket into my van. Then we covered the rest of the shark with plastic.

After a complicated but successful recovery, a plaster frame holding the body of the shark arrived at the Sternberg Museum three weeks later.



Cretoxyrhina
(cray tox ee RHI na)