From the Institute's Photo Library

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Some 230–245 million years ago, an approximately 10-m-long ichthyosaur belonging to the genus *Merriamosaurus* died in the sea, sank to the sea floor and was buried by fine-grained particles, now forming the bituminous shales of the Middle Triassic (Anisian–Ladinian) Botneheia Formation (Sassendalen Group). An almost perfect mould of the ichthyosaur's remains was eventually heaved up on the island of Spitsbergen, Svalbard, by mountain-forming movements of the Earth's tectonic plates. Discovered by Steve Johansen in Dickson Land, near the shore of Isfjorden, during a hunting trip in 2001, the fossil was excavated by a team from the Norwegian Polar Institute, led by Dierk Blomeier, in 2007. The original skeleton had completely deteriorated but left behind was a very detailed, high-fidelity imprint, shown here with excavation team member Jörg Lenk in a photograph by Michael Trapp. Ichthyosaurs were one group among many kinds of predatory marine reptiles that flourished during the Mesozoic era. Superficially resembling dolphins or tuna fish, ichthyosaurs first appeared about 250 million years ago (preceding dinosaurs by about 20 million years) and died out about 90 million years ago (dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago). This and other recent finds make Svalbard one of the world's richest sites for carnivorous, marine reptile fossils. This *Merriamosaurus* specimen, one of the largest and best articulated ichthyosaurs discovered in Svalbard's Triassic strata, can be seen at the Tromsø Museum.

The Norwegian Polar Institute's Photo Library preserves some 90 000 polar-related images captured during the last 135 years, including glass plates and slides, stereo images, print photographs and modern digital photographs. Images documenting Norwegian activities in the Arctic and Antarctic comprise the bulk of the collection. Scanning the older images and registering newer ones is an ongoing endeavour. To date, digital versions of 24 000 pictures are available in a searchable online database at http://sivert.npolar.no/fotoweb/. The online images are described mostly in the Norwegian language; please send an e-mail to bildearkiv@npolar.no for assistance in searching the database.