ICHTHYOSAURS.FOSSILS.IM

Live young and giant eyes

They did not have to come ashore, and some of them could see in the dark.

“Fossils of pregnant ichthyosaurs show that they gave birth to live young in the open ocean.” Official wording says that is one reason “they never had to return to land to reproduce or give birth.”

The official story	Official wording
Live young	A Stenopterygius fossil “reveals that ichthyosaurs didn’t lay eggs but instead had live births.” A gallery page, kept as its own wording, mentions a female with evidence of six unborn young, and another specimen preserved in the process of giving birth.
Giant eyes	“The eyes of the ichthyosaur Ophthalmosaurus grew to more than 22 centimetres in diameter. For its size, it has the biggest eyes of any animal that ever lived.”
Warm blood	All ichthyosaur species “are thought to have been warm blooded.” A German fossil “suggests that ichthyosaurs had blubber to help trap their body heat.”
How big?	The 10-metre Rutland Temnodontosaurus trigonodon is currently the largest ichthyosaur found in the UK. Ichthyotitan severnensis, known from Somerset jaw fossils, is estimated at as much as 25 metres — around the length of an average blue whale, on that official wording.

A short quiz

1. Did ichthyosaurs have to come ashore to lay eggs?
2. How large, officially, were Ophthalmosaurus eyes?
3. Is the 10-metre Rutland animal officially the largest ichthyosaur known anywhere?

Answers. No — official wording is live birth in the open ocean. More than 22 centimetres. No — it is currently the largest found in the UK; Ichthyotitan is estimated at as much as 25 metres.

Wording from the Natural History Museum pages “What is an ichthyosaur?” and “Fossil Marine Reptiles gallery,” checked 18 November 2026. ichthyosaurs.fossils.im is independent of the museum. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.