ICHTHYOSAURS.FOSSILS.IM

The skull and the sister

Official pages tell the Lyme Regis find more than once, and they do not all use the same year.

A Natural History Museum collection page says Joseph Anning found the skull of the ichthyosaur now called Temnodontosaurus platyodon in 1810, and Mary found parts of the neck a year later. A discover page, and the Mary Anning page, date Joseph's find to 1811.

The official story	Official wording
1810	Collection page: Joseph found the skull in 1810; Mary found parts of the neck a year later. It calls this "the first ever discovered" ichthyosaur skull, now Temnodontosaurus platyodon.
1811	Discover page: in 1811, "a 15-year-old boy called Joseph Anning stumbled upon an ichthyosaur skull near Lyme Regis." Mary Anning page: "in the autumn of 1811, when Mary was 12."
1812–1813	Mary Anning page: in November 1812 she dug the outline of a five-metre-long skeleton, finished several months later. Discover page: by early 1813, "the first largely complete specimen to be uncovered."
A careful first	The Mary Anning page says that although this "wasn't the first ichthyosaur to be found, it was the first to be scientifically studied and described in literature."

A short quiz

1. Does a collection page date Joseph's skull to 1810 or 1811?
2. On the Mary Anning page, how long was the skeleton whose outline she dug in November 1812?
3. Does this sheet pick one official year and discard the other?

Answers. 1810 (the discover and Anning pages say 1811). Five metres. No — both official years are kept.

Wording from the Natural History Museum pages "Marine reptile collection," "What is an ichthyosaur?" and "Mary Anning: The unsung hero of fossil discovery," checked 18 November 2026. ichthyosaurs.fossils.im is independent of the museum. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.