**Synthesis**

**Read the two articles below and, in a paragraph of not more than 100 words, sum up the discovery described in the two articles, saying what is known and what is still not known about the creature.**

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| **The biggest flying monster in the world**  The largest known creature ever to have flown, an extinct reptile with an estimated wingspan of 51ft, has been discovered by fossil hunters in west Texas.  The creature, which lived more than 60 million years ago, had twice the wingspan of the biggest previously known pterodactyl, or winged reptile, and nearly six times the wing-span of the condor, the largest bird now alive.  The estimated size of the creature is derived from calculations based on the size of many fragmentary, and some complete bones found in excavations during the past three years at Big Bend national park in Brewster County, Texas.  Announcement of the discovery, in the present issue of *Science,* is expected to rekindle an old debate among palaeontologists over whether flying reptiles flapped their featherless, leathery wings or merely climbed on to high perches and leapt into the air currents to soar like gliders.  One scientist familiar with the discovery said that the mammoth size of the newly found creature made improbable the theory that it was able to rise into the air under wing-power alone. He noted, however, that the lack of a reliable estimate of the reptile's weight virtually precluded any calculation of its aerodynamic properties.  The fossils were found by Mr Douglas Lawson, a graduate student at the University of California, who began searching in the Big Bend area while a student at Texas University. His continuing explorations and study of the fossils are being carried out under the auspices of the university's vertebrate palaeontology laboratory.  Although the reptile clearly represents a new species, it has not yet been given a formal scientific name. There are many known species of flying reptiles. Scientists generally refer to all as pterosaurs, but the popular name pterodactyl is also considered correct. All are extinct.  'What's so extraordinary about this thing is its tremendous size', Dr Wann Langston, director of the vertebrate palaeontology laboratory, said. 'There has never been anything like this before.'  In his report Mr Lawson says he has discovered the partial skeletons of three of the large pterosaurs, including the remains of four wings, a neck, the hind legs (forelimbs with claws are frequently part of the wing structure), and jaws, which were toothless.  Unlike most previously known pterosaurs, the Big Bend creature was found in non-marine sediments, suggesting that its habitat was away from oceans. Most pterosaurs are considered to have been fish eaters, scooping up their prey while gliding over the waves.  The Big Bend fossils were found in fresh-water sediments far from the oceans of that time. In his report Mr Lawson writes that the reptile's unusually long neck suggests it may have been a carrion-eater, feeding on dead dinosaurs, much as the condors and other vultures of today consume dead animals. |

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| **Monster could not flap wings**  The extinct reptile with an estimated wingspan of 51ft, found by fossil hunters in western Texas, would have been a warm-blooded creature, with a furry coat like that of a mammal, according to Mr Adrian Desmond, of Harvard University museum of comparative zoology.  Mr Desmond, who is in England writing a book about dinosaurs and pterosaurs, said yesterday that the creature was much larger than any pterosaur - the popular name of which is pterodactyl - found before. The one found in 1970 in Soviet Kazakhstan was furry.  'It is wrong to think that the pterodactyl had featherless, leathery wings, because they were warm-blooded creatures, and the one found in Russia had furry wings, and fur on its fingers', he said. 'In that, they were like mammals, although they are called reptiles.'  The size of the creature found in the Big Bend national park in Brewster County, Texas, was derived from calculations based on the size of many fragmentary, and some complete bones, excavated over the past three years.  Mr Desmond said that it would not have flapped its wings, because they would be too heavy for the creature to cope with if flapped. It would simply have raised them and floated into the air when it wished to fly.  'The find is much larger than anything discovered before. The largest one found before the Texas excavation had a wingspan of 23ft, and the latest find is extraordinary because it was never thought that there could be anything bigger. It is very fascinating indeed.' |

(Reports from *The Times* )

Suggested answer:

The remains of extinct flying reptiles have been found in Texas. The size of the bones suggests that they were much bigger than other known flying creatures. However, it is impossible to calculate their weight, and therefore to be sure how they flew; they may have been too big to flap their wings. Unlike most prehistoric reptiles, they did not live on fish - they were not found in ocean sediments - and possibly ate carrion. They are thought to have had featherless, leathery wings, but one scientist believes they were warm-blooded and covered with fur.