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Weird, extinct amphibian had a rapid-fire 'slingshot' tongue

A 99-million-year old fossil find that almost wasn't rewrites our understanding of "weird and wonderful" creature.

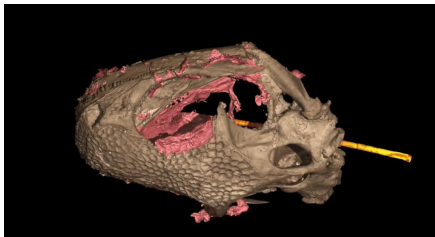


Steph Panecasio

Nov. 5, 2020 5:30 p.m. PT



LISTEN - 01:39

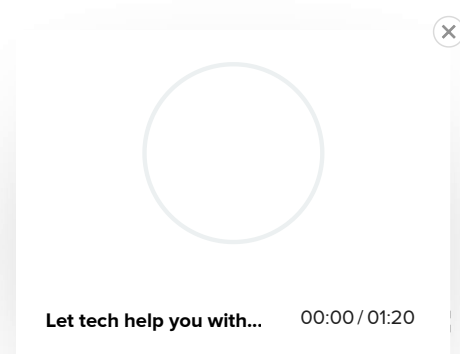


A reconstruction of the bizarre creature's skull, with a long bone (yellow) that anchored a rapid-fire tongue.

Edward Stanley/Florida Museum of Natural History/VGStudioMax3.4

Step aside, chameleons. There was once another speedy tongue making sticky waves in the animal kingdom. A new study, published in [Science](#) on Thursday, establishes the now-extinct amphibians known as albanperontids (or albies) as the earliest users of a slingshot-style tongue, used to snatch prey from the air by contracting and launching at great speed.

A set of 99-million-year old albie fossils, discovered in Myanmar, also introduce the world to a new species, *Yaksha perettii*. Based on the size of the skull, scientists were able to estimate an adult size of approximately two inches long, not including the tail. Don't let that fool you into thinking they were weak though, as the tiny amphibians were armored and their tongues acted like a deadly, rapid-fire fist.



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Edward Stanley, co-author of the study and director of the Florida Museum of Natural History's Digital Discovery and Dissemination Laboratory, said "this discovery adds a super-cool piece to the puzzle of this obscure group of weird little animals."

Knowing they had this ballistic tongue gives us a whole new understanding of this entire lineage."

The discovery of the fossils was almost deemed unremarkable, with a tongue bone garnering the fossils a chameleon classification until Susan Evans, a professor of vertebrate morphology and paleontology at University College London, recognized the tell-tale signs of an albie -- namely, the unusual jaw and neck joints as well as forward-looking eyes.

While the discovery of a ballistic-tongued amphibian might sound like it will help us understand the lineages of amphibians like frogs and salamanders, Evans cautions that may not be the case.

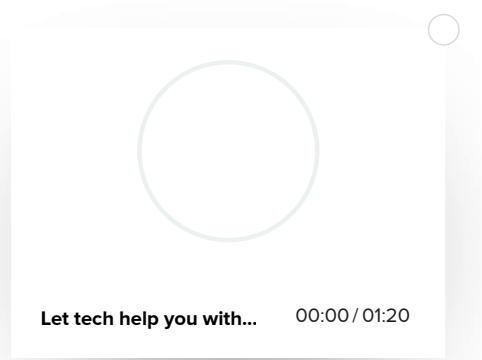
"In theory, albies could give us a clue as to what the ancestors of modern amphibians looked like," she said. "Unfortunately, they're so specialized and so weird in their own way that they're not helping us all that much."

First published on Nov. 5, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. PT.

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Sci-Tech 

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The best showerheads of 2021

A great showerhead will make your morning routine much more refreshing. We help you sort through the options to find one that'll help make getting clean feel wonderful.



Andrew Gebhart  Dec. 22, 2020 11:00 a.m. PT



Best showerhead overall
High Sierra Classic Plus

Jump to
details

SEE AT AMAZON



Best features
Aquadance 7-inch Premium Rainfall
Combo

Jump to
details

SEE AT AMAZON



Best premium model
Moen S6320

Jump to
details

SEE AT HOME D...



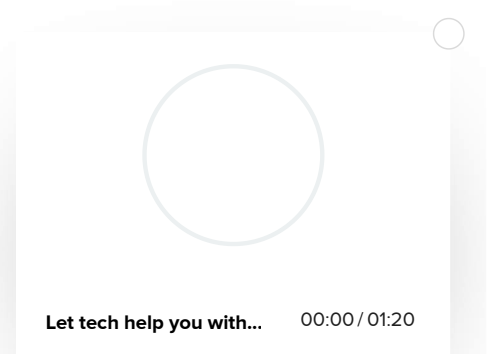
Best rain shower
American Standard Spectra eTouch

Jump to
details

SEE AT HOME D...

A great showerhead can make a huge difference when it comes to starting your day on the right note. If I'm feeling groggy in the morning, need a boost of energy midday or if I'm trying to relax after a workout, a hot shower tends to cure a lot of what ails me. On the other hand, a bad shower can leave me feeling grumpier than when I started -- especially if the spray pattern doesn't provide full coverage or the water pressure is feeble.

It can be a tall order to find the best showerhead, but a good one can make all of the difference to your bathing experience. You can find dozens of options at hardware stores and online retailers. Most look similar and lots offer the same general combination of features -- which may include a full-coverage rain setting or a narrower, more intense massage stream.





Delta's clever showerhead tucks a handheld into the main body.

Andrew Gebhart/CNET

The price, finish and materials can vary wildly, and you can also look for a showerhead with a lower gallons-per-minute rating if you'd like to save water. Some showers include a handheld sprayer and others include a wider variety of spray pattern settings.

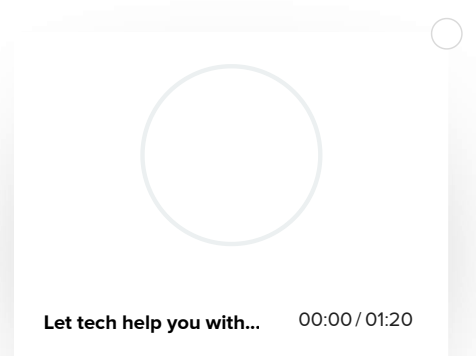
Read more: [The best smart scales for 2021](#)

To help you pick the best showerhead, I've spent the past few weeks testing a wide variety of them. All feature easy and non-invasive installs - which was important for my rented apartment. All are reasonably priced between \$50 and \$200. All are relatively efficient with water -- with ratings between 1.5 and 2.5 gpm. Otherwise, all of the showerheads I tested are highly regarded in terms of both customer and industry reviews.

If you're looking for an affordable showerhead that you can install yourself, here are my picks for the best options you can find. I update this periodically. Once you make your purchase, here's a guide to [installing a showerhead yourself](#), and here's how to [keep your showerhead clean](#).

Best showerhead overall

High Sierra Classic Plus





Andrew Gebhart/CNET

The affordable \$50 High Sierra Classic Plus showerhead gets all of the basics right. It sprays in a wide pattern with great coverage and plenty of firmness. I tend to like a relaxing stream on my body and a firm spray on my face and hair. The Classic Plus doesn't offer any alternate spray pattern settings, but the main one balances both of those needs well. If you tend to find a good default and stick with it, look no further.

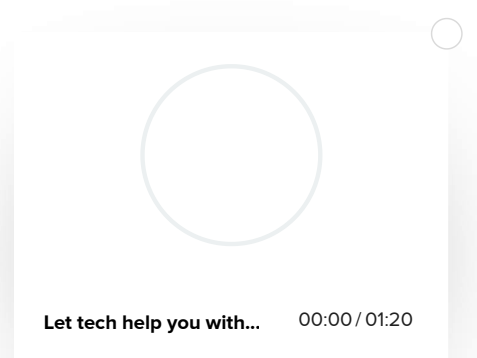
The Classic Plus has a simple and elegant design. It's one of the most affordable showerheads on this list and conserves water as well with a 1.5 gpm rating. The default coverage setting offers as much coverage and velocity as showerheads that use a full gallon more. That velocity isn't overpowering. I was able to relax while taking a shower but it was firm enough to make quick work of soap and dirt on days when I needed to get clean quickly.

If you're looking for something fancy with a wide variety of settings, I have plenty of alternate options below, but this is the [Amazon Echo Dot](#) of showerheads. It's simple, affordable and elegant. If you don't care about extras and just want something to get the job done well, go with the water-saving \$40 High Sierra Classic Plus. Available in brushed nickel, bronze, polished brass or a chrome finish. [Read more.](#)

SEE AT AMAZON

Best features

Aquadance 7-inch Premium Rainfall Combo





Andrew Gebhart/CNET

The \$58 Aquadance 7-inch Premium showerhead is a great choice if you're looking for a dual showerhead with a lot of features. It includes a handheld showerhead that sits in place behind the main showerhead. Both offer a full coverage setting, an intense massage setting, one that mixes those two, and a mist.

The full coverage setting on both the main shower and the handheld showerhead feels great. It balances firmness with wide coverage and still feels relaxing. The intense massage provided a great way to mix it up when I wanted to really feel the pressure and water flow. I ended up leaving the main shower on full coverage and kept the handheld showerhead on the massage setting if I wanted that extra intensity of a high pressure shower.

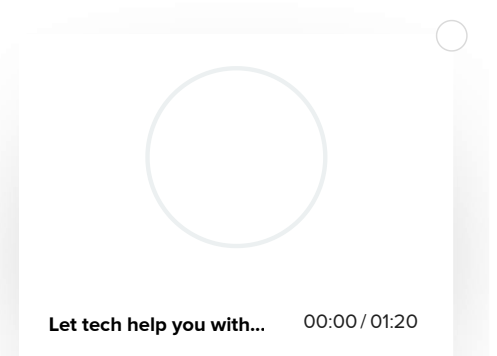
You can pause the stream of either if you want to save water while you suds. You can run both showerheads simultaneously on the same or different settings. You'll lose some water pressure with the dual shower setting, so you could just as easily switch back and forth from the main showerhead to the handheld shower. You can switch settings by turning a dial or you can use the splitter to easily swap between the main showerhead and the handheld showerhead.

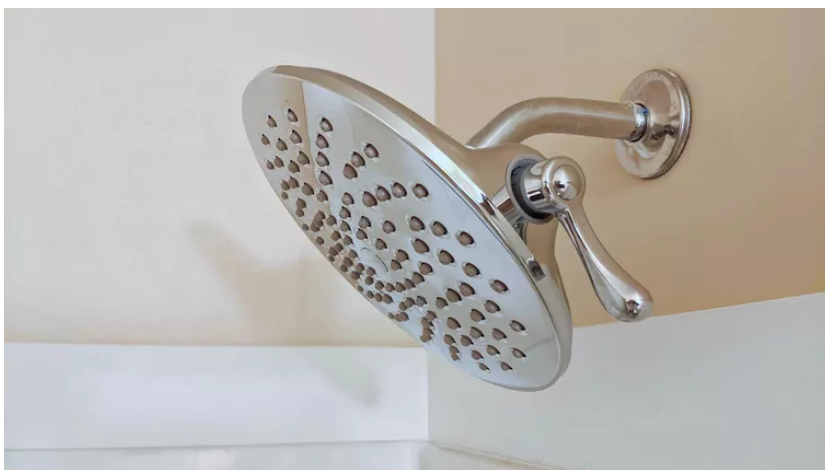
Whatever you want your shower to feel like -- regular showerhead, handheld shower or dual shower -- this Aquadance has an option for you. If you're the type that likes options and likes to change settings based on your mood, this is the best showerhead for you. [Read more.](#)

SEE AT AMAZON

Best premium model

Moen S6320





Andrew Gebhart/CNET

The \$164 Moen S6320 looks like a high-end shower with its 8-inch diameter and polished chrome finish. The main full coverage setting again strikes the right balance between relaxing coverage and firmness. Plus, the S6320 switches to an intense massage setting that also feels great. Lots of the massage settings that I tested were too narrow to be useful outside of spot cleaning. Moen's is still wide enough to provide actual coverage while still providing a nice boost of intensity.

You can also switch back and forth easily with a handle on the side of the showerhead. It's simple enough to control that I was able to find it and switch the setting while my eyes were closed after sudsing my face.

If you want a showerhead that looks higher end while still maintaining a simple elegance, the Moen S6320 fits the bill. It doesn't have a lot of features, but the two settings are both awesome and switching between them is so easy that you can do it with your eyes closed -- literally. [Read more.](#)

SEE AT HOME DEPOT

Best rain shower

American Standard Spectra eTouch



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Andrew Gebhart/CNET

Showering with the American Standard Spectra eTouch rain showerhead actually feels like standing under a gentle stream or being outside during a warm summer rain. It's super relaxing. The Spectra eTouch is pretty expensive at over \$100 for the brushed nickel or chrome finish, but it's economical with water at a 1.8 gpm rating.

The Spectra includes a remote you can attach to your shower wall to switch between multiple spray settings or you can simply touch the rim of the showerhead to do the same. It feels high-tech without adding any complexity.

The different settings include a fine mist and two varieties of an intense massage spray -- though I found both to be too narrow to provide any coverage. The rainfall shower setting was also a little too gentle on my face, so the Spectra doesn't have a single setting that hits the perfect balance between a firm feel and full coverage.

Nevertheless, it has a pulsating massage setting for spot cleaning, so if you mostly want your shower to feel like a relaxing stream, this is a good pick and it works just fine at an angle. Most rain shower systems need to be directly overhead and lots take a specialized install. This one works with your existing equipment and still feels great. [Read more.](#)

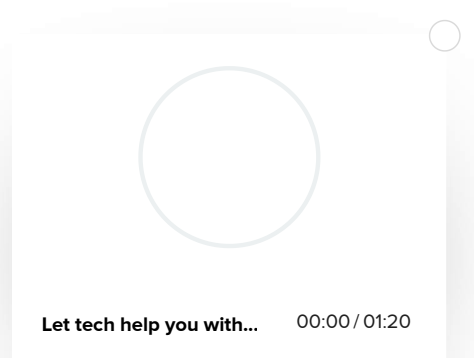
[SEE AT HOME DEPOT](#)

Honorable mentions

Kohler Forte 22169 -- Kohler's \$75 showerhead provides nice coverage. The main setting strikes the necessary balance between feeling firm but relaxing. You can easily switch to a concentrated massage mode or a fine mist. Overall, it's a solid, well-balanced fixed showerhead option that you should consider if you like the look or the brand. It even saves water with a 1.75 gpm rating. It simply didn't stand out as much as the ones above and the concentrated massage stream is too narrow to be useful.

Delta In2ition Two-in-One -- This \$133 Delta showerhead features a clever adjustable showerhead design in which a handheld shower is nested within the main showerhead. The main shower provides the full coverage option, and the handheld shower offers a more intense stream. You can also run both the main and handheld shower at once, though the water pressure expectedly dips a bit, and I'm not a fan of low water pressure. The handheld showerhead easily pulls free or you can leave the shower arm in place for a stationary massage stream. All of the settings are functional but the main coverage option is a little too weak for my tastes. The main showerhead is also a little hard to pivot. That's definitely a minor nitpick. This is a competent shower that's worth your consideration but the little drawbacks took away just enough to prevent it from ranking higher for me.

Read more: [Here's why you should put a smart plug in your bathroom](#)



Not recommended

Speakman S-2252-E175 -- None of the showers I tested were outright bad, but this \$85 model from Speakman doesn't have a strong enough stream for my tastes. The main mode is fine if underwhelming. The alternate nozzle setting basically just lets water pour straight out without any added water pressure or water flow at all. Overall it was a low water pressure shower experience.

Culligan WSH-C125 -- This affordable \$36 model from Culligan includes a filter and has a bunch of different settings. Changing between the nozzle settings is a pain. The main shower works well enough, but none of the alternate modes are inspiring. Again, this is a competent shower, but you have plenty of better options.

Read more: [This smart toilet recognizes your butt and analyzes poo for diseases](#)

Testing and cleaning

I've taken a lot of showers over the past couple of weeks. When testing a showerhead system, I look at a lot of factors: The diameter of the face, the gallons-per-minute output, the number of settings, the materials, the design and more. We also run an anecdotal test on the water flow, water pressure and power of the spray pattern with dried egg yolk. More than anything, though, I showered and noted how each one felt.

Some settings did a better job of removing eggs than others.

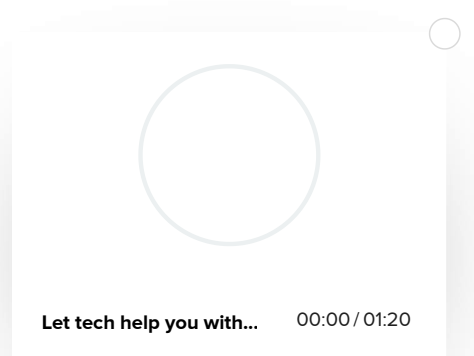
Andrew Gebhart

I leave each model installed for a couple of days so I can take a variety of showers. During the first shower with a new shower system, I'm paying close attention to each spray pattern and how they feel, but I also want to shower when I'm not thinking about it as much. With each model, I shower when I'm groggy in the morning and do a post-workout shower to cool down.

After every shower, I take notes on the shower experience. Was it firm, relaxing or both? Was the showering experience intense enough to get the soap and shampoo off quickly or did I have to change settings? Is it easy to change settings?

For the egg test, I brushed egg yolk onto a cutting board and let it dry for 24 hours. Then I held the board 20 inches from the showerhead while it ran for ten seconds and noted how much yolk was removed. I ran this test for each setting on each showerhead. Most only removed a little yolk if any, but a few settings proved weaker or stronger relative to the rest.

Different showers check different boxes, but at the end of the day, what mattered most to me was the actual showering experience. None of the models I tested were terrible, but a few rose above the rest and cleaned up the competition.



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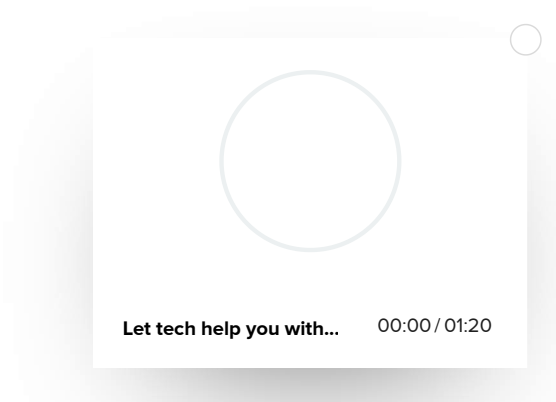
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