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World

World's smallest dinosaur is actually a 'weird' prehistoric lizard, scientists say

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[World](#), [World's smallest dinosaur is actually a 'weird' prehistoric lizard](#)

However, the [high-profile March 2020 scientific paper](#) that unveiled the invention of *Oculudentavis khaungrae* was retracted later that 12 months. New analysis revealed on Monday, based mostly on one other, better-preserved amber specimen, means that the cranium was from a prehistoric lizard.

"It's a really weird animal. It's unlike any other lizard we have today," stated co-author of the brand new research Juan Diego Daza, a herpetologist and assistant professor of organic sciences at Sam Houston State University in Texas, in a information launch.

"We estimate that many lizards originated during this time, but they still hadn't evolved their modern appearance," he stated. "That's why they can trick us. They may have characteristics of this group or that one, but in reality, they don't match perfectly."

The authors of the brand new paper revealed within the journal *Current Biology* named the creature *Oculudentavis naga* in honor of the Naga folks of India and Myanmar, the place the amber was discovered. They stated it was from the identical household or genus as *Oculudentavis khaungraae*, however seemingly a completely different species.

Oculudentavis means "eye tooth bird" in Latin, however Daza stated taxonomic guidelines for naming and organizing animal species meant that they needed to proceed utilizing it though it wasn't correct.

"Since *Oculudentavis* is the name originally used to describe this taxon, it has priority and we have to maintain it," Daza stated. "The taxonomy can be sometimes deceiving."

The better-preserved amber, which was present in the identical amber-mining area in Myanmar as the primary described *Oculudentavis* specimen, held a part of the lizard's skeleton, together with its cranium, with seen scales and mushy tissue. Both items of amber had been 99 million years outdated.


Distorted skulls

The authors stated the creature was tough to categorize, however through the use of CT scans to separate, analyze and evaluate every bone from the 2 species, they detected traits that recognized the animals as lizards.

These included the presence of scales; enamel hooked up on to the jawbone relatively than nestled into sockets, as dinosaur enamel had been; lizardlike eye constructions and shoulder


bones; and a hockey-stick-shaped cranium that is universally shared by different scaled reptiles.

In the better-preserved specimen, the staff noticed a raised crest working down the highest of the snout and a flap of free pores and skin underneath the chin that will have been inflated in show, traits shared by different lizards.

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The authors consider that each species' skulls had grow to be deformed because the amber, constructed from globs of resin from historic tree bark, hardened round them. They stated that *Oculudentavis khaungraae*'s snout was squeezed into a narrower, extra beaklike form whereas *Oculudentavis naga*'s braincase was compressed.

The distortions magnified birdlike options in a single cranium and lizardlike options within the different, stated coauthor Edward Stanley, director of the Florida Museum of Natural History's Digital Discovery and Dissemination Laboratory.

 *Oculudentavis naga*, depicted in this artist's impression, is a bizarre lizard that research initially categorized as a tiny, birdlike dinosaur.

"Imagine taking a lizard and pinching its nose into a triangular shape," Stanley stated in a assertion. "It would look a lot more like a bird." Birds are the one residing relations of dinosaurs.

An moral minefield

Some of paleontology's most fun finds lately have emerged from northern Myanmar's wealthy amber deposits. Much of the amber finds its method to markets in southwest China, the place it is purchased by collectors and scientists. However, [ethical concerns about who benefits from the sale of amber have emerged](#), significantly since 2017, when Myanmar's navy took management of amber mines. Government forces and ethnic minorities have fought on this area for years, and a [United Nations report](#) has accused the navy of torture, abductions, rape and sexual violence.

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The research authors stated within the information launch that the amber was bought by gemologist Adolf Peretti earlier than 2017 from a licensed firm that has no ties to Myanmar's navy, and cash from the sale didn't help armed battle.

They stated use of the specimen adopted tips set out by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, which has requested colleagues to chorus from engaged on amber sourced from Myanmar since June 2017.

"As scientists we feel it is our job to unveil these priceless traces of life, so the whole world can know more about the past. But we have to be extremely careful that during the process, we don't benefit a group of people committing crimes against humanity," Daza stated.

"In the end, the credit should go to the miners who risk their lives to recover these amazing amber fossils."

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