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# 'Highly unusual' creature locked in amber for 99MILLION years is confirmed to be a LIZARD that once roamed Myanmar alongside dinosaurs

- New species of previously misclassified 'smallest dinosaur' has been identified
- 'Highly unusual' creature originally described as a hummingbird-sized dinosaur
- But analysis of a separate fossil also found in Mynamar confirmed it was a lizard .
- 99-million-year-old specimen including a fossil skull is preserved in amber

## By SAM TONKIN FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 17:52 BST, 14 June 2021 | UPDATED: 17:55 BST, 14 June 2021



Scientists have identified a new species of the 'really weird' creature previously misclassified as the world's smallest dinosaur, reinforcing the belief it was actually a lizard.

The 99-million-year-old specimen — which is stunningly preserved in amber — is in the same genus as 'Oculudentavis khaungraae', whose original description as a hummingbird-sized dinosaur was retracted last year.

Both fossils were discovered in the same area of Myanmar.



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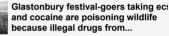
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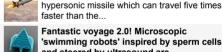
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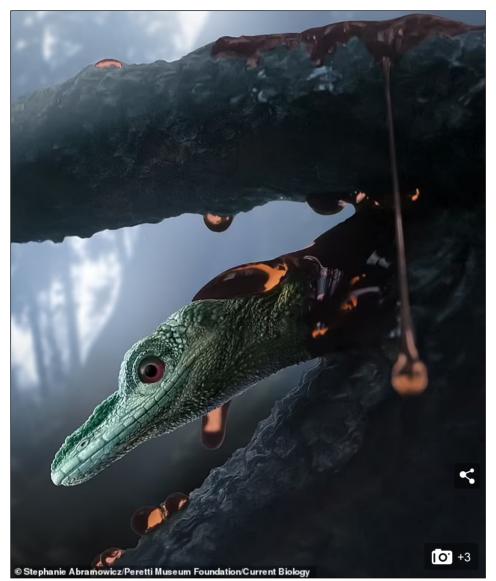
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Discovery: Scientists have identified a new species of the 'really weird' creature previously misclassified as the world's smallest dinosaur, reinforcing the belief it was actually a lizard. Oculudentavis naga is pictured in an artist's reconstruction following the analysis

'The specimen puzzled all of us at first because if it was a lizard, it was a highly unusual one,' said Arnau Bolet, of Barcelona's Institut Català de Paleontologia Miquel Crusafont.

'We concluded that both specimens are similar enough to belong to the same genus, Oculudentavis, but a number of differences suggest that they represent separate species.'

The new species has been named 'Oculudentavis naga' in honour of the Naga people of India and Myanmar. Its confirmation as a lizard followed the use of CT scans to analyse the fossil skull and partial skeleton.

Major clues included the presence of scales, teeth attached directly to its jawbone - rather than nestled in sockets, as dinosaur teeth were - lizardlike eye structures and shoulder bones, and a hockey stick-shaped skull bone

## **HOW IS A DINOSAUR DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER REPTILES?**

Dinosaurs had an upright stance which allowed them to run faster and for longer than other reptiles the same size.

This was because of their straight back legs which were positioned directly under their bodies.

By comparison, other reptiles had legs that sprawl out to the side like today's lizards and crocodiles.

Their thigh bones are almost parallel to the ground, meaning they walk and run with a side-to-side motion.

Dinosaur skulls also had distinctive openings behind the eyes and in the snout and lower jaw.

Meanwhile, their teeth fitted into sockets in the jaw in a peg-like fashion,

EXCLUSIVE Pete Doherty ENGAGED to Katia de Vidas! Singer proposed to film editor after revealing he's been clean of heroin for two years

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'I know one day I'll get my happy ending':

universally shared among scaled reptiles, also known as squamates.

Researchers also determined both species' skulls had deformed during preservation.

Oculudentavis khaungraae's snout was

squeezed into a narrower, more beak-like profile while naga's braincase — the part of the skull that encloses the brain — was compressed.

whereas in lizards they are attached

directly to the jawbone by ligaments.

Source: Natural History Museum

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The distortions highlighted bird-like features in one skull and lizard-like features in the other, said study co-author Edward Stanley, director of the Florida Museum of Natural History's Digital Discovery and Dissemination Laboratory.

'Imagine taking a lizard and pinching its nose into a triangular shape,' Stanley said. 'It would look a lot more like a bird.'



Stuck in time: The 99-million-year-old specimen — which is stunningly preserved in amber (pictured) — is in the same genus as 'Oculudentavis khaungraae', whose original description as a hummingbird-sized dinosaur was retracted last year

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Loose Women star Denise Welch says she is 'relieved' after obsessed fan, 53, admitted stalking her and setting her home on fire

Gwyneth Paltrow continues her birthday tradition by stripping naked AGAIN as she celebrates turning 49 by reclining in a bathtub

▶ R Kelly accusers share relief and joy as disgraced singer is found guilty on nine counts of sex trafficking and racketeering and now faces up to 100 years in prison



Comparison: The animal's confirmation as a lizard followed the use of CT scans to analyse the fossils. Oculudentavis naga (top) is in the same genus as Oculudentavis khaungraae (bottom)

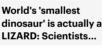
Oculudentavis' bird-like skull proportions, however, do not indicate that it was related to birds, according to fellow co-author Susan Evans, professor of vertebrate morphology and paleontology at University College London.

'Despite presenting a vaulted cranium and a long and tapering snout, it does not present meaningful physical characters that can be used to sustain a close relationship to birds, and all of its features indicate that it is a lizard,' she said.

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While the two species' skulls do not closely resemble one another at first glance, their shared characteristics became clearer as the researchers digitally isolated each bone and compared them with each other.

'We concluded that both specimens are similar enough to belong to the same genus, Oculudentavis, but a number of differences suggest that they represent separate species,' Bolet said.

However, the researchers came up short in their attempts to find Oculudentavis' exact position in the lizard family tree.



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'It's a really weird animal. It's unlike any other lizard we have today,' said herpetologist Juan Diego Daza. 'We think it represents a group of squamates we were not aware of.'

The Cretaceous period, 145 to 66 million years ago, gave rise to many lizard and snake groups on the planet today, but tracing fossils from this era to their closest living relatives can be difficult, Daza added.

'We estimate that many lizards originated during this time, but they still hadn't evolved their modern appearance,' he said.

'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 study is published in the journal Current Biology.

# WHAT FOSSILS HAVE BEEN TRAPPED IN BURMESE AMBER?

Often used in jewelry, Amber is fossilized tree resin—the oldest of which dates back more than 300 million years.

In recent years the Hukawng Valley in northern Myanmar, formerly Burma, has yielded numerous finds.

In January 2017, researchers discovered a 100-million-year-old insect preserved in amber which bore a passing resemblance to ET.

Its features, including triangular head and bulging eyes, were so unique that researchers placed in into a new scientific order, Aethiocarenodea.

The eyes on the side of its head would have given the insect the ability to see at almost 180 degrees simply by turning its head.

In June 2017, researchers revealed a stunning hatchling trapped in amber, which they believe was just a few days old when it fell into a pool of sap oozing from a conifer tree in Myanmar.

The incredible find showed the head, neck, wing, tail and feet of a now extinct bird which lived at the time of the dinosaurs, 100 million years ago, in unprecedented detail.

Researchers nicknamed the young enantiornithine 'Belone,' after the Burmese name for the amber-hued Oriental skylark.

The hatchling belonged to a group of birds known as the 'opposite birds' that lived alongside the ancestors of modern bird.

Archaeologists say they were actually more diverse and successful – until they died out with the dinosaurs 66 million years ago.

They had major differences from today's birds, and their shoulders and feet had grown quite differently to those of modern birds.

John Lennon's lost track: Cassette with recording of Beatles icon singing 'Radio Peace' and complaining about Fab Four during 33-minute interview

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Strictly Come Dancing star John Whaite has called him his 'true love' - but after watching from the sidelines as TV baker made history... who is Paul Atkins?

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Tom Hanks, 65, cuts a casual figure as he heads out on a health walk in a denim shirt and navy cotton trousers

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Cameron Diaz talks meeting 'hidden gem' husband Benji Madden... and explains why she is not attracted to his twin brother Joel

Dog the Bounty Hunter says he has found campsite missing Brian Laundrie stayed at with his PARENTS after returning from fateful trip without girlfriend Gabby Petito

Khloe Kardashian admits she missed 'being paid' to spend time with her famous In December 2017, experts discovered incredible ancient fossils of a tick grasping a dinosaur feather and another – dubbed 'Dracula's terrible tick' - swollen after gorging on blood.

The first evidence that dinosaurs had bloodsucking parasites living on them was found preserved in 99 million-year-old Burmese amber.

The newly-discovered tick dates from the Cretaceous period of 145 to 66 million years ago.

In 2021, researchers announced they had discovered a new species of land snail from 99 million years ago preserved in amber moments after giving birth.

The gastropod's 'marshmallow-like' soft body of Cretatortulosa gignens was preserved in the sap, as were her five offspring.

The same week, scientists in Myanmar announced another the discovery of a new species of ancient lizard trapped in amber at roughly the same time.

'Oculudentavis naga' was confirmed as a lizard following CT scans analyzing its skull and partial skeleton.

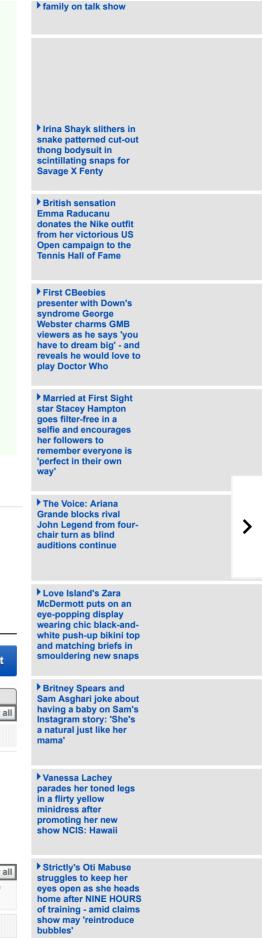
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Dolly Parton fans BLAST TikTok after singer's unexplained ban from app Parton, 75, had just created her account on the format

Olivia Jade Giannulli glows in bright green suit as she grabs dinner in West Hollywood... after impressive Dancing With The Stars performance

 Singer-songwriter Andrea Martin - who wrote songs for Monica, En Vogue and SWV passes away at 49

lggy Azalea shows off her famous backside in

a skintight spandex bodysuit as she joins Pitbull on the Californian leg of his I Feel Good tour

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Tyra Banks is roasted for her eccentric outfit on Dancing With The Stars many compared to Jurassic Park dinosaur: 'You look like a dilophosaurus'

Sheridan Smith reveals her son's middle name is a tribute to late brother Julian who tragically died aged 18... as she remembers him on his 50th birthday

Jana Kramer reveals that she was both emotionally and physically abused in past relationships... two months after finalizing divorce from Mike Caussin

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Strictly Come Dancing bosses 'consider ditching studio audience and reintroducing quarantine bubbles in wake COVID fiasco

Chrissy Teigen claims she 'honestly' does not care about looking perfect on Instagram after fans ask why she posts 'unflattering' photos of herself

Married At First Sight viewers are left shocked as Franky offends his mother-of-two wife Marilyse after revealing his ideal match 'wouldn't have kids'

Feeling so blessed to have our little family': Paul Weller's daughter Leah marks her 30th birthday by sharing a snap with husband Tomo and son Kouzen

The Kid Laroi leaves Scooter Braun after just

• three months and is moving on to Adam Leber's Rebel Management

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Carol Vorderman flaunts her taut stomach in royal blue gym wear as she immerses herself in a 'sweaty session' Ensured she stayed in shape

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Chrissy Teigen covers up in a trench coat while holding hands with John Legend... before stripping down to a bra top and bicycle shorts at a store

Harry Potter star Tom Felton was saved by surfing icon Kelly Slater after collapsing at the Ryder Cup celebrity tournament in Wisconsin

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Drag queen Courtney Act cuts a casual figure leaving a rehearsal with dance partner Joshua Keefe in Sydney - ahead of their debut on Dancing With The Stars

Chelsea Handler goes Instagram official with her fellow comedian boyfriend Jo Koy following weeks of speculation about their relationship

Moving on! Braunwyn Windham-Burke hauls baggage through LAX just weeks after confirming her split with fitness instructor girlfriend Fernanda

Example recalls the extraordinary moment his model wife Erin McNaught bravely picked up a large Huntsman spider with her bare hands

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How R. Kelly was finally brought to justice: One-time R&B superstar used his fame to get away with abuse against young women and men

Noel Gallagher's daughter Anais, 21, shows off her toned frame in pretty gingham bikini as she lounges on the beach in Ibiza

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Nadiya Hussain says winning Bake Off made her confident 'in her

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Clivia Culpo shows off her incredibly toned abs in a black crop top as she picks up a postworkout coffee in West Hollywood Fit and healthy

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Licorice Pizza first trailer: Philip Seymour Hoffman's son, 18, makes acting debut in coming-of-age film which also stars Bradley Cooper

PIERS MORGAN: We need an urgent vaccine to save us from the Duke and Duchess of Polluting Hypocrisy and their cynical campaign to set up a rival moneygrabbing Royal Family

Dave Bautista adopts an abused three-month old puppy and offers a \$5,000 reward to find the 'sick piece of sh\*t responsible for this' Top man

Drake gets A-list accommodations from Miami steakhouse Prime 112 as they close down their bar so he can dine prior to performance

>

The Bachelorette Michelle Young's men unveiled! Meet the contestants - including an NFL player, yoga guru and 'pizzapreneur' - pursuing her heart

Simone Biles admits she 'should have quit gymnastics before Tokyo' - revealing the trauma of Larry Nassar's sexual abuse became 'too much'

• Kate Garraway wears a rainbow coloured jumper and red trousers as she puts on a cheery display after her stint at Smooth FM

Ruthie Ann Miles, 38, makes rare appearance at the Tony Awards... three years after daughter, five, was killed and she suffered a miscarriage

Kendall Jenner's boyfriend Devin Booker reveals he has COVID-19 but declines to share vaccination status... one week after going to Jamaica with model

Billie Eilish jets out of NYC holding hands with her boyfriend Matthew

Tyler Vorce after performing at Governor's Ball in NYC Close

Cynthia Bailey announces she's leaving The Real Housewives of Atlanta after 11 seasons: 'It's time to move on to my next chapter'

▶ Irina Shayk is the picture of elegance in a black pinstripe shirt and trousers as she makes a low-key appearance on the final day of Milan Fashion Week

Julia Bradbury receives her Covid booster jab as she prepares to undergo a mastectomy following shock breast cancer diagnosis

French connection! Kim Kardashian announces her SKIMS lingerie will be launching in Paris: 'I'm so excited for you guys to feel it'

Country singer Jason Aldean's wife Brittany models 'Anti-Biden' Tshirts with their young children in family snapshots as she touts her political beliefs

>

Suranne Jones transforms into 'the first modern lesbian' Anne Lister as she resumes filming for the second series of Gentleman Jack in Halifax

Tom Hiddleston and girlfriend Zawe Ashton pose for first time as a couple as she supports him at Tony Awards Smitten

Gigi Hadid looks effortlessly chic in an oversized tan jacket and trousers as she makes a low-key departure from Milan ahead of Paris Fashion Week

• 'It's everything!' Victoria Beckham shows off her svelte waist in classy navy tailored trousers and a matching jumper from her AW21 collection

EXCLUSIVE Real Housewives of

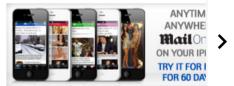
Housewives of Cheshire: Boyzone star Shane Lynch's wife Sheena joins the cast ahead of the dramafilled new series

> 'She really took her time!' EastEnders' Louisa Lytton reveals she's named her baby daughter Aura Olivia after being in labour for THREE DAYS

'I was in two of the biggest dramas of the year - my agent needs the sack!' Martin Compston hits back at troll after they slam Vigil's 'c\*\*p' ending

Will Smith says he was careful about what parts he chose as he climbed up to the A list: 'I wanted to play roles you would give to Tom Cruise'

• Loose Women's Judi Love reveals she's lost 4lb during Strictly thanks to dancing with the 'very passionate' pro-dancer Graziano Di Prima



### **GADGET REVIEWS**

iPad Pro review: Apple takes the tablet to new heights (at a price)



Apple's new iPad is blazingly fast, gorgeous to look at, and quite simply the best tablet out there - and for a lot of people, probably the best computer out there.

🖓 43 comments 🛛 👪 1 video

#### The small smart display with big potential: Google Home Hub review



Google is late to the game with its Home Hub, but the low price and AI features make it a great choice for controlling your home, showing pictures and even helping run your life.

🖵 1 comment 🏭 2 videos

'Good enough for most people': iPhone XR review



On one hand, the XR lacks the highresolution screen and dual-lens camera on the XS. but it is \$250 cheaper and still get most of the other cutting-edge features found on the more expensive model.

🖵 195 comments 🏭 1 video

The Pixel 3 outsmarts the iPhone (IF you trust Google with all your information)



Al seems to permeate every part of its software, from the ability to answer calls for you to being able to

almost perfectly predict your morning commute.

🖓 comments 🛛 👪 1 video

# Bigger and better in every way: Apple's XS really does take the iPhone to the Max



Apple's new iPhone XS and XS Max go on sale on Friday - and the biggest handset Apple has ever made is also its best (and possibly unsurprisingly, its most expensive).

🖓 24 comments 🛛 💾 1 video

## The \$250 beauty device that works like 'Photoshop for your face'



Israeli beauty-tech firm Pollogen has launched its Geneo Personal device, which stimulates oxygen from beneath the skin's surface to give you a clearer, fresher face within minutes.

🖓 19 comments 🛛 💾 1 video

# iOS 12 review: The update that really will improve your iPhone



Rather than cram in a plethora of new features, Apple's latest update is about boosting stability, with improvements in everything from FaceID and battery life.

🖵 211 comments 🏭 2 videos

# Naim Atom: The hifi that will change the way you listen to music



It's eye-wateringly expensive at \$2,999, but Naim's Uniti Atom is a revelation, an integrated amplifier than makes it easy to stream m at a quality you've probably nev heard before.

>

Comments

# The \$1,000 wireless speaker that reall worth the price: Naim Mu-so Qb revie



Naim's incredible Mu-So Qb tak you back to the good old days where the music captivates and enthralls, rather that simply being something in the background.

🖵 comments 👪 1 video

## The hi-tech \$2,000 spin bike that really could change your life



Peloton's hi-tech bike lets you stream live and on demand rides to your home - and it's one of the best examples of fitness technology out there - at a price.

🖵 comments 🚜 1 video

The best all in one wireless speaker you'll ever hear: Naim Mu-so review



It might not be a name familiar to the US market, but Naim is a legendary British brand hoping to make a splash with the American launch of its \$1499 Mu:So speaker.

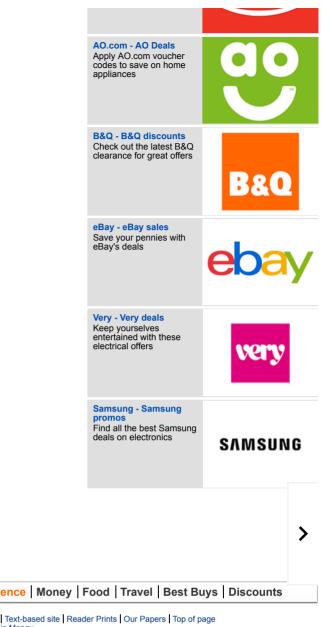
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