

Fossil from Germany Provides New Details about Ancient Flying Reptiles

今回は、ドイツ南部バイエルン州で発見された翼竜の化石についての記事です。約1億4700万年前に生きていた新しい種類の生物が確認され、恐竜時代の生態系や進化を理解する手がかりになると期待されています。文中の「identify」は「特定する、発見する」という意味で、identify a new species（新種を発見する）や identify a problem（問題を特定する）のように使えます。恐竜は人が誕生するはるか前から存在し、今も多くの謎に包まれています。あなたは恐竜の化石を実際に見たことがありますか？そのときの印象を講師と話してみましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Scientists say a **fossil** found in Germany is providing new details about flying reptiles that lived on Earth about 147 million years ago.

The fossil was discovered in 2015 in the southeastern German state of Bavaria. It contains the remains of a newly **identified** species called *Skiphosoura bavarica*.

Skiphosoura is considered a pterosaur, an ancient flying **reptile**. It lived toward the end of the Jurassic Period. Researchers say the creature played an important part in the development of ecosystems during the age of the dinosaurs.

The reptile had a wing reach of about 2 meters for traveling and a set of sharp teeth to help capture and eat other animals. *Skiphosoura* would have been one of the largest fliers in its ecosystem. Researchers say the discovered fossil was in good shape, with nearly every bone remaining in the skeleton. This has permitted the team to learn new details about this pterosaur.

One of the leaders of the fossil examinations is David Hone of Queen Mary University of London. He told Reuters news agency he thinks the fossil find was "of huge importance."

Hone was the lead writer of a study describing the team's work in the publication *Current Biology*. He added that *Skiphosoura* has provided new information about the evolution of pterosaurs. "It also brings other pterosaur finds we had already made into focus," Hone said.

He added that the discovery also helps better explain "where they go in the family tree of pterosaurs" and permits scientists to show this development from early to later forms.

"The teeth are quite long and sharp. They are for [puncturing](#) and holding," Hone said. He noted these were likely used to catch smaller animals such as lizards, small mammals, insects and possibly fish.

Pterosaurs are considered [ancestors](#) of the dinosaurs. They were the first of three groups of vertebrates – animals with a backbone – to enjoy powered flight. Pterosaurs disappeared about 66 million years ago in the mass extinction that also took out most of the dinosaurs after an asteroid struck Earth.

Scientists divide pterosaurs into two major groups - the early non-pterodactyloids and the later pterodactyloids. The early group's members had a short head, short neck, long tail and a long fifth toe on the foot. The later ones had a large head, long neck, short tail, long wrist and short fifth toe.

The team says the discovery of *Skiphosoura* – along with another species that lived 170 million years ago in Scotland – have helped shape important events in pterosaur development.

Reuters reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. **fossil (n.)** part of a once-living thing from many years in the past

Fossils of early humans have been found in different places in eastern Africa.

2. **identify (v.)** to discover; to find something new (often used in science)

Researchers have identified two new butterfly varieties in the area.

3. **reptile (n.)** a cold-blooded animal with scales, such as a snake or a lizard

An iguana is a reptile that lives in the desert.

4. **puncture (v.)** to break through with something sharp

A piece of metal punctured my tire as I was driving to the airport.

5. **ancestor (n.)** a person or living thing that lived in the past and is related to a later generation

My ancestors came from southeast Asia about a hundred and fifty years ago.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What is *Skiphosoura bavarica*, and where was it discovered?
2. What characteristics of *Skiphosaura* make it unique and important to research?
3. Why did all the pterosaurs disappear?
4. Have you ever had a chance to look at fossils at a science museum? If so, what was it like? If not, would you like to?
5. What kinds of reptiles live in your area? What do you know about them—their appearance, physical characteristics, behavior and effect on the local ecosystem? If you are not sure, what places or websites can you go to to find out?