

Pinocchio rex: Paleontologists discover long-snouted T. rex in China

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USPA News - Paleontologists in southeastern China have discovered fossils of a long-snouted tyrannosaur, confirming the existence of such a dinosaur species for the first time, according to research published in the journal Nature Communications on Wednesday. The newly found ancient predator, which lived during the Maastrichtian period about 66 to 72 million years ago, has been nicknamed Pinocchio rex because it looked very different from most other tyrannosaurs.

It is a cousin of Tyrannosaurus rex, the mighty predator which is perhaps best known from the 1993 film 'Jurassic Park'. Palaeontologists had long been uncertain of the existence of long-snouted tyrannosaurs after earlier discoveries of juvenile tyrannosaurs with elongated heads. Those discoveries were not sufficient. The new dinosaur - officially named Qianzhousaurus sinensis - had an elongated skull and long, narrow teeth compared with the deeper, more powerful jaws and thick teeth of a conventional T. rex. "This is a different breed of tyrannosaur. It has the familiar toothy grin of T. rex, but its snout was much longer and it had a row of horns on its nose," said Dr. Steve Brusatte of the University of Edinburgh's School of GeoSciences. "It might have looked a little comical, but it would have been as deadly as any other tyrannosaur, and maybe even a little faster and stealthier." The new specimen, described by scientists from the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences (CAGS) and the University of Edinburgh, is of an animal nearing adulthood. It was unearthed in Ganzhou, a city in southeast China's Jiangxi province, and is said to be largely intact and remarkably well preserved. It is believed Qianzhousaurus sinensis lived alongside deep-snouted tyrannosaurs and were not in direct competition with them, as they were larger and probably hunted different prey. "The new discovery is very important. Along with Alioramus from Mongolia, it shows that the long-snouted tyrannosaurids were widely distributed in Asia," said Professor Junchang Lu of the Institute of Geology at the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences. "Although we are only starting to learn about them, the long-snouted tyrannosaurs were apparently one of the main groups of predatory dinosaurs in Asia." Paleontologists expect to find more long-snouted tyrannosaurs as excavations in Asia continue.

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