

Snake with hips most primitive ever found

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Scientists in Argentina say they have found a snake with hips and hind legs that provides additional evidence of descent from a land-living lizard.

Najash rionegrina lived about 90 million years ago in the late Cretaceous, at a time when birds were evolving from dinosaurs and the great world continent Pangaea was breaking up, researchers said. The fossil was discovered in southern Patagonia by Sebastián Apesteguía of the Argentine Museum of Natural Sciences in Buenos Aires, and Hussam Zaher of the University of Sao Paulo, The Telegraph reported.

In an article in Nature, the scientists say that the fossil is the most primitive snake found and demonstrates that snakes evolved on land, disputing a theory that snakes were originally marine creatures. The scientists told the Telegraph they believe that the snake's anatomy is consistent with a burrowing animal and say that the fossil was found in rock layers that appear to be terrestrial in origin.

Unlike modern snakes, najash had bones linking its pelvis to 3-foot-long hind legs.

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