

260-million-year-old ear discovered

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German paleobiologists studying 260-million-year-old fossils found in Russia have discovered what's believe to be the first anatomically modern ear.

Johannes Muller and Linda Tsuji of Humboldt University's Natural History Museum in Berlin said the finding significantly pushes back the date of the origin of an advanced sense of hearing, suggesting the first known adaptations to living in the dark.

The scientists said the fossil, found in Permian era deposits near the Mezen River in central Russia, possessed all the anatomical features typical of a vertebrate with a surprisingly modern ear.

The discovery is detailed in the online journal PLoS One.

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