

Researchers uncover 'oldest' dog remains in Swiss cave

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This 2008 photo shows a German Shepherd. Researchers have found that fragments of a dog's skull and teeth discovered in a cave in Switzerland date back more than 14,000 years in what could be the oldest known remains of man's best friend.

Researchers have found that fragments of a dog's skull and teeth discovered in a cave in Switzerland date back more than 14,000 years in what could be the oldest known remains of man's best friend.

The fossils were among a haul of archaeological finds uncovered in 1873 in the Kesslerloch cave in northern Switzerland, Swiss news agency ATS said Monday.

But it was only last year that researchers at Germany's Tuebingen University took a closer look at them, it said.

"During a recent re-analysis of the faunal remains, we identified a cranial fragment and teeth of the domestic dog," the researchers said in an article in the International Journal of Osteoarchaeology.

"The large maxillar fragment was directly dated to ...14,100-14,600 BP (Before Present)," it said.

"We argue that the maxilla fragment must now be considered the earliest indisputable directly dated evidence of a domestic dog," they said.

Belgian [archaeologists](#) have claimed to have found the cranium of a dog dating back 30,000 years, but researcher Hannes Napierala told ATS: "We are skeptical because the [teeth](#) are very similar to those of a wolf."

The fragment found in the cave in Switzerland's Schaffhausen canton, however, was clearly distinct from remains of [wolves](#), the researchers said.

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