

New species of flying reptile identified on B.C. coast

January 10 2011

Persistence paid off for a University of Alberta paleontology researcher, who after months of pondering the origins of a fossilized jaw bone, finally identified it as a new species of pterosaur, a flying reptile that lived 70 million years ago.

Victoria Arbour says she was stumped when the small piece of [jaw bone](#) was first pulled out of a fossil storage cabinet in the U of A's paleontology department.

"It could have been from a dinosaur, a fish or a [marine reptile](#)," said Arbour. "

Arbour, a PhD student in paleontology, says the first clue to the fossil's identify came after she compared it to known [species](#) of [pterosaurs](#), "I found a previously published paper describing the teeth of a previously discovered pterosaur and ours was very close," said Arbour.

"The teeth of our fossil were small and set close together," said Arbour. "They reminded me of piranha teeth, designed for pecking away at meat." That led Arbour to believe her new species, named *Gwawinapterus beardi* was a scavenger of the late Cretaceous. "It had a wing span of about 3 metres and patrolled the sky and set down to feed on the leftover kills made by predator dinosaurs of the time such as *Albertosaurus*."

The fossil is not only a new species it's the first pterosaur of any kind to

be found in British Columbia. It was found on Hornby Island, off the coast of Vancouver Island

However, Arbour says the place where the [fossil](#) was located has little to do with the actual area where the living pterosaur, was actually flying around 70 million years ago.

"In the late Cretaceous period, the B.C. coastal islands were about 2,500 kilometres to the south and part of what is now mainland, California," said Arbour.

Arbour's research was published in the *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences*.

Provided by University of Alberta

Citation: New species of flying reptile identified on B.C. coast (2011, January 10) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-01-species-reptile-bc-coast.html>

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