

# First dinosaur fossil discovered in Angola

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In this undated photo supplied by the PaleoAngola Project, researcher Octávio Mateus analyses part of a fossilized dinosaur. A paper published Wednesday March 16, 2011, in the Annals of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences describes a classic, long-necked, elephant-sized, plant-eating sauropod. The international team that found and identified the fossilized forelimb bone say it is from a new dinosaur, citing unique skeletal characteristics. (AP Photo/PaleoAngola Project/HO)

Scientists say they have discovered the first fossil of a dinosaur in Angola, and that it's a new creature, heralding a research renaissance in a country slowly emerging from decades of war.

A paper published Wednesday in the Annals of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences describes a long-necked, plant-eating sauropod, among the largest creatures ever to have walked the earth. The international team that found and identified the fossilized forelimb bone say it is from a previously unknown dinosaur, citing unique skeletal characteristics.

The fossil was found along with fish and shark teeth in what would have been a [sea bed](#) 90 million years ago, leading its discoverers to believe the dinosaur might have been washed into the sea and torn apart by ancient sharks.

The new dinosaur has been dubbed Angolatitan adamastor - Angolatitan means "Angolan giant" and the adamastor is a sea giant from Portuguese sailing myths.

Matthew F. Bonnan, a [sauropod](#) expert at Western Illinois University, was not involved with the Angolan research. But after reading the report, he said he expected their claim to have found a new dinosaur to hold up.

"I think they've been very careful," he said, adding the find could add to knowledge about how sauropods adapted to different environments.

Bonnan also said it was "really cool" to see such research coming out of Angola.

"The neat thing about dinosaur paleontology is that it's becoming more global," he said, saying that was giving scientists a global perspective on the evolution of [dinosaurs](#).

"The more people and places that we involve in science, the better off we all are," Bonnan said.

The researchers in Angola say their PaleoAngola project that yielded the fossil, started in 2005, is the first systematic paleontological expedition in Angola since the early 1960s.

"Angola has had more than its share of civil war," said Dutch project member Anne Schulp of the Natuurhistorisch Museum Maastricht. He said science hasn't been a priority, but "Angola is catching up right now."

An anti-colonial war broke out in Angola in the 1960s, and civil war followed independence from Portugal in 1975. The fighting ended in 2002 when the army killed rebel leader Jonas Savimbi. The country was left littered with land mines and impoverished. The discovery of oil in recent years has set off an economic boom, but many Angolans have been left behind.

PaleoAngola member Octavio Mateus of Portugal's Universidade Nova de Lisboa and Museum of Lourinha said lack of money has been the greatest barrier to research.

"We don't have problems with land mines, we don't have problems with safety" despite the country's troubled past, Mateus said.

Tatiana Tavares of the Universidade Agostinho Neto is also on the PaleoAngola team, and her Luanda, Angola university has Angolaitan adamastor [fossil](#) specimens on public display. Other specimens in Portugal will later be returned to the university.

Mateus discovered the Angolaitan adamastor in 2005. In the years since, excavations and research were completed and a paper was written for review by other scholars, culminating in Wednesday's publication.

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