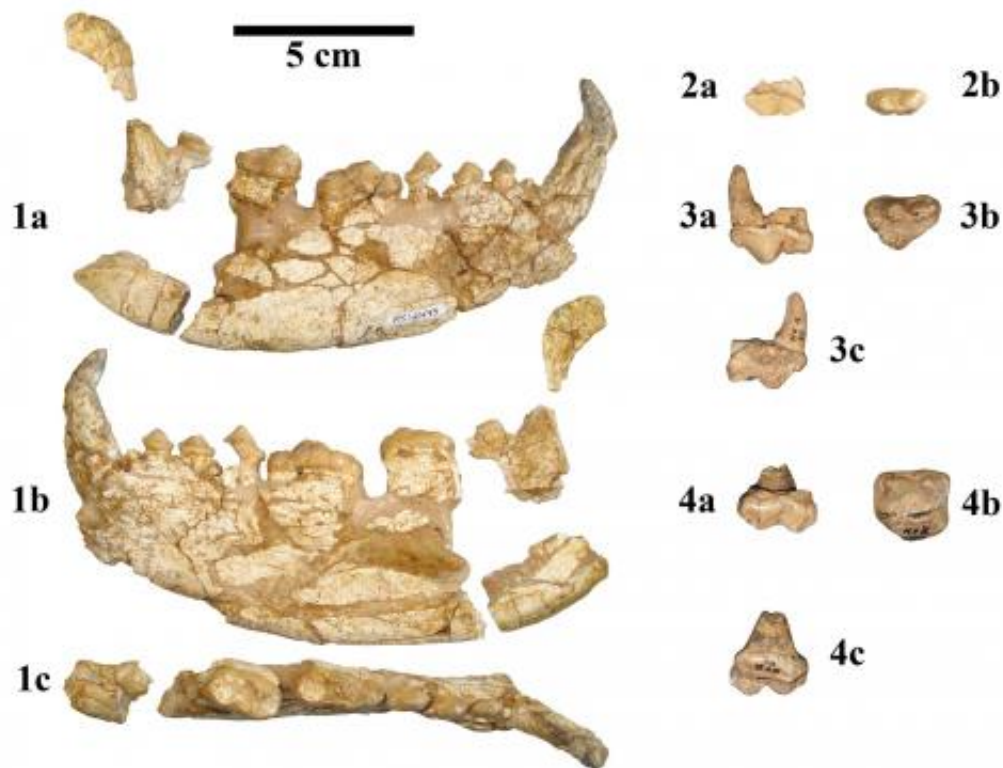


Oldest fossil of giant panda family discovered

November 14 2012



Dentognathic material of *Kretzoiarctos* gen. nov. *beatrice* Credit: Citation: Abella J, Alba DM, Robles JM, Valenciano A, Rotgers C, et al. (2012) *Kretzoiarctos* gen. nov., the Oldest Member of the Giant Panda Clade. *PLoS ONE*, 7(11): e48985. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0048985

New fossils found in Spain are thought to be of the oldest recorded ancestor of the giant panda.

The fossils reveal the origins of this unique bear, as described in a paper published November 14 in the open access journal [PLOS ONE](#) by Juan Abella and colleagues from the National Museum of Natural Sciences and the Catalan Institute of Paleontology, Spain.

The two 11.6 million year old fossil jaws and teeth were discovered in southwest Europe and represent a new genus likely to be the oldest known members of the giant panda family. The fossils bear the characteristics of a bear adapted to eating tough plant material like bamboo. The giant panda, native to certain parts of China, is the only living member of this unique bear family with these dietary habits.

Corresponding author Juan Abella adds "The new genus we describe in this paper is not only the first bear recorded in the [Iberian Peninsula](#), but also the first of the [giant panda](#)'s lineage."

More information: Abella J, Alba DM, Robles JM, Valenciano A, Rotgers C, et al. (2012) Kretzoiarctos gen. nov., the Oldest Member of the Giant Panda Clade. PLoS ONE 7(11): e48985.
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