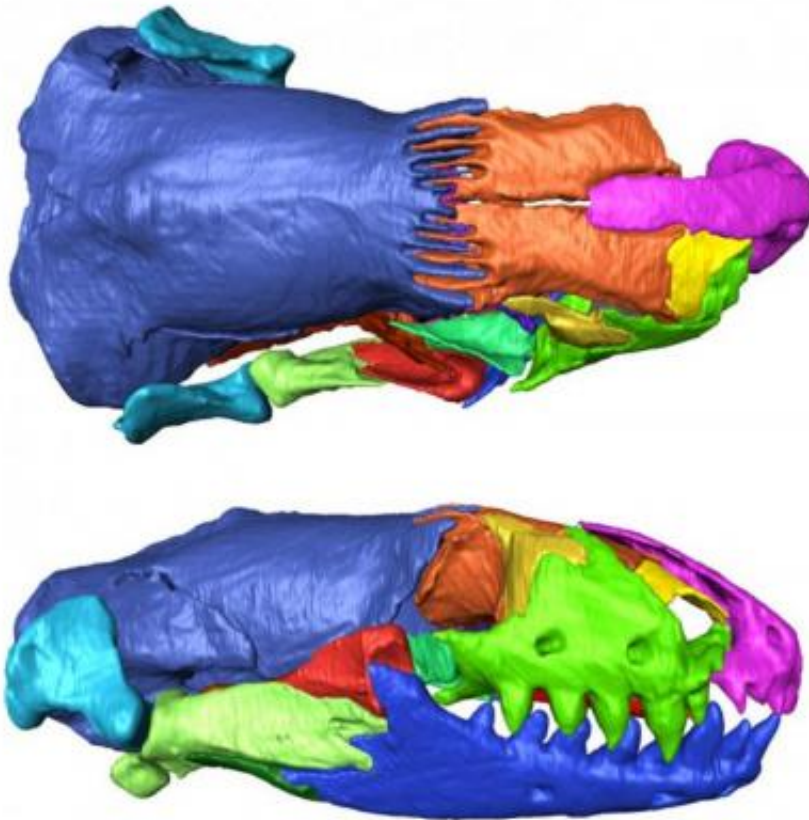


First intact skull of Mediterranean worm lizard found

June 4 2014



This image depicts a virtual model of the holotype after removing the covering crust and the infilling matrix. Credit: *PLoS ONE* 9(6): e98082.
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0098082

The first intact skull of a Mediterranean worm lizard has been found in Spain, according to a study published June 4, 2014 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Arnau Bolet from Institut Català de Paleontologia Miquel Crusafont (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and colleagues.

Only isolated fragments of fossil Mediterranean worm lizards have previously been found in Europe, and currently, our limited knowledge of their evolution is mainly based on molecular studies. The worm lizard is a limbless, scaled reptile and categorized in the genus *Blanus* in the Mediterranean. The authors have now found the only known fossil worm lizard skull from Europe and have determined it's a [new species](#), called *Blanus mendezi*. This almost complete 11.3 mm skull and vertebrae from the Middle Miocene (11.6 million years ago) is the most complete fossil of this genus.

In the study, the scientists described the fossil and integrated available molecular, paleontological, and biogeographic data to discover that both the general configuration of the skull and the teeth are in accordance with those of extant *Blanus*, *B. mendezi*, which represents the oldest record of the Western Mediterranean clade. Scientists suggest that the new species emerged after the split between the two main (Eastern and Western Mediterranean) extant groups of blanids.

Dr. Bolet added, "The use of CT-scan techniques applied to this superbly preserved worm lizard [fossil skull](#) has allowed an unprecedentedly detailed description for an early member of the family, providing insights into the evolutionary history of this poorly known group of reptiles."

More information: Bolet A, Delfino M, Fortuny J, Almécija S, Robles JM, et al. (2014) An Amphisbaenian Skull from the European Miocene and the Evolution of Mediterranean Worm Lizards. *PLoS ONE* 9(6): e98082. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0098082](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0098082)

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