

New Australian pterosaur may have survived the longest

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The discovery of a previously unknown species of pterosaur, which may have persisted as late as the Turonian period (90-93 million years ago), is reported in *Scientific Reports* this week. The fossil, which includes parts of the skull and five vertebrae, is the most complete pterosaur specimen ever found in Australia. The findings suggest it may be a late-surviving member of the *Anhanguera* genus of pterodactyls, which were believed to have gone extinct at the end of the Cenomanian period (100-94 million years ago).

Pterosaurs are known from fossils discovered on every continent but their remains are often incomplete and fragmentary because their bones are thin and hollow. The [fossil record](#) for pterosaurs in Australia is particularly sparse with only 20 known fragmentary specimens.

Adele Pentland and colleagues discovered the new pterosaur, which they have named *Ferrodraco lentoni* (from the Latin *ferrum* (iron), in reference to the ironstone preservation of the specimen, and the Latin *draco* (dragon)), in the Winton Formation of Queensland. Based on the shape and characteristics of its [jaws](#), including crests on upper and [lower jaw](#) and spike-shaped teeth, the authors identified the specimen as belonging to the *Anhanguera*, which are known from the Early Cretaceous Romualdo Formation of Brazil. Comparison with other anhanguerian pterosaurs suggests that *Ferrodraco*'s wingspan measured approximately four metres. The authors also report a number of unique dental characteristics, including small front teeth, which distinguish *Ferrodraco* from other anhanguerians and identify it as a new species.

The [fossil](#) was discovered in 2017 in a part of the Winton formation that may have formed as late as the early Turonian, which suggests that the anhanguerians may have survived later in Australia than elsewhere.

More information: *Ferrodraco lentoni* gen. et sp. nov., a new ornithocheirid pterosaur from the Winton formation (cenomanian-lower turonian) of Queensland, Australia, [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-019-49789-4](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-49789-4)

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