

Crikey! Massive prehistoric croc emerges from South East Queensland

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200 mm



Skull pieces of *Paludirex vincenti*. Credit: Jorgo Ristevski

A prehistoric croc measuring more than five meters long—dubbed the 'swamp king' - ruled south eastern Queensland waterways only a few million years ago.

University of Queensland researchers identified the new species of prehistoric croc—which they named *Paludirex vincenti* - from fossils first unearthed in the 1980s.

UQ Ph.D. candidate Jorgo Ristevski, from UQ's School of Biological Sciences, said they named the species after Geoff Vincent who discovered the giant fossilized [skull](#) near the town of Chinchilla.

"In Latin, 'Paludirex' means 'swamp king', and 'vincenti' honors the late Mr Vincent," he said.

"For several years the fossilized skull was on display in the Queensland Museum, before it was donated to the Chinchilla Museum in 2011.

"The 'swamp king' was one intimidating croc.

"Its fossilized skull measures around 65 centimeters, so we estimate *Paludirex vincenti* was at least five meters long.

"The largest crocodylian today is the Indo-Pacific crocodile, *Crocodylus porosus*, which grows to about the same size.

"But *Paludirex* had a broader, more heavy-set skull so it would've

resembled an Indo-Pacific crocodile on steroids."

Paludirex was one of the top predators in Australia a few million years ago, capable of preying on giant prehistoric marsupials.



The 'swamp king' was one intimidating croc. Credit: The University of Queensland

"The waterways of the Darling Downs would once have been a very [dangerous place](#) because of it," Mr Ristevski said.

Mr Ristevski's supervisor, Dr. Steve Salisbury, said various species of prehistoric crocodylians had existed in Australia.

"Crocs have been an important component of Australia's fauna for millions of years," Dr. Salisbury said.

"But the two species we have today—*Crocodylus porosus* and *Crocodylus johnstoni*—are only recent arrivals, and were not part of the endemic croc fauna that existed here from about 55 million years ago.

"Whether *Paludirex vincenti* went extinct as a result of competition with [species](#) like *Crocodylus porosus* is hard to say.

"The alternative is that it went extinct as the climate dried, and the river systems it once inhabited contracted—we're currently investigating both scenarios."

The research has been published in the open access journal *PeerJ*.

More information: Jorgo Ristevski et al, Australia's prehistoric 'swamp king': revision of the Plio-Pleistocene crocodylian genus *Pallimnarchus* de Vis, 1886, *PeerJ* (2020). [DOI: 10.7717/peerj.10466](https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.10466)

Provided by University of Queensland

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