

Giant prehistoric bird fossils found in Antarctica

18 May 2016

Scientists on Wednesday said they have found the remains of a giant prehistoric bird that lived 50 million years ago in Antarctica and had the largest wingspan ever recorded.

"Almost like a feather."

The researchers published the find in the *Journal of Paleontology*.

Paleontologists at a [natural history museum](#) in Argentina said they had identified the pelagornithid, or bony-toothed bird, nearly three years after its fossilized bones were first found at an Argentine research base on the Antarctic island of Marambio.

© 2016 AFP

"Almost three years ago, remains began to appear of what we believed could be this bird. Then we found a bone that confirmed that it was a pelagornithid," an extinct family of enormous seabirds, said Carolina Acosta Hospitaleche, a researcher on the project.

The bird's wings, fully extended, spanned more than 6.4 meters (21 feet), she said.

Her colleague Marcos Cenizo, the director of the Natural Sciences Museum of La Pampa, said the bird was the largest pelagornithid specimen ever found.

"The shape of their wings allowed them to glide and cross large distances across the oceans," he said.

Antarctica specialists say there were two kinds of pelagornithid on the continent, one that reached up to five meters tall, with a similar wingspan, and another that stood more than seven meters.

The [birds](#) likely developed to their monstrous size some 50 million years ago, when warming ocean temperatures would have given them an abundance of food to thrive, the researchers said.

But the recently identified specimen would have been quite light despite its stature—30 to 35 kilograms (66 to 77 pounds), Cenizo said.

APA citation: Giant prehistoric bird fossils found in Antarctica (2016, May 18) retrieved 27 November 2020 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-05-giant-prehistoric-bird-fossils-antarctica.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.