

Newly identified sharp-clawed dinosaur species was as big as a school bus

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Portellsaurus sosbaynati. Credit: Santos-Cubedo et al, 2021, PLOS ONE (CC-BY 4.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

A team of researchers from Universitat Jaume, Universitat de València and Grup Guix, Vila-real, has identified a new species of sharp-clawed dinosaur excavated at a site in Catalonia. They have written a paper describing their findings, available on the open-access site PLOS One.

The dinosaur was originally found in what has been described as a prehistoric graveyard in Portell, Catalonia, back in 1998, but only recently has it been thoroughly studied.

The dinosaur, which was approximately eight meters long, has been classified as a member of the styracosternan ornithopod genus—it has been named *Portellsaurus sosbaynati*. It was also a member of a type of iguanodon known as styracosternans, which are believed to have lived in what is now Spain. It has been dated back to approximately 130 million years ago.

The identifying fossil was a jawbone. The researchers were able to make out that it was a [new species](#) due to two autapomorphic features, as well as what they describe as a combination of

characteristics, two of which were the absence of a bulge along a part of the bone and a deep cavity not seen in others of its genus.

The dinosaur was described as having multiple [sharp claws](#), some rising from its "thumbs" and others from its "fingertips." The researchers note they would have been useful for fighting off predators, as well as in slicing open fruit. They would not have been used to kill prey, however, as the dinosaur ate only plants. The researchers note that the dinosaur also had very large nostrils, which indicated it likely had a very keen sense of smell, likely beneficial for foraging. It also had a very large tail, which would have been carried upright to maintain balance. While standing, the researchers estimate it would have been just over three meters tall, and it would have weighed at least 3,600 kilograms.

The researchers note that *Portellsaurus sosbaynati* would have been related to other [dinosaurs](#) that have been identified as living in what is now Niger and China. They suggest the finding sheds new light on the evolution of ornithopods.

More information: Andrés Santos-Cubedo et al, A new styracosternan hadrosauroid (Dinosauria: Ornithischia) from the Early Cretaceous of Portell, Spain, *PLOS ONE* (2021). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0253599](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0253599)

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