



Monkeydactyl: Pterosaur Species

Why in News

The **new pterosaur fossil was discovered in the Tiaojishan Formation of Liaoning, China**, and is thought to be 160 million years old.

- It has been **named Kunpengopterus antipollicatus**, also **dubbed “Monkeydactyl”**.

Tiaojishan Formation

- Geographically, the Tiaojishan Formation is **widely distributed in western Liaoning Province and the neighboring northern Hebei Province (China)**.
- This formation is lithologically composed of intermediate lava and pyroclastic rocks, interlayered with basic volcanic rocks and sedimentary deposits.
- It **contains abundant and well-preserved fossil plants**, including leaves, seeds and fruits, permineralized rhizomes and wood.



LOCATION OF MONKEYDACTYL FOSSIL



Evidence of a sharp toothed tree climbing dinosaur with opposable thumbs has been discovered and experts are calling it the "Monkeydactyl"



Key Points

▪ About Pterosaurs:

- The pterosaur species were **reptiles**, close cousins of dinosaurs and the **first animals after insects to evolve powered flight**.
- They evolved into **various species**, while some were as large as an F-16 fighter jet, others were as small as paper airplanes.
- They **flourished** during all periods (**Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous**) of the **Mesozoic Era** (252.2 million to 66 million years ago).

▪ About the Monkeydactyl Fossil (*Kunpengopterus antipollicatus*):

- **"Antipollicatus"** in ancient Greek means **"opposite thumbs"**, and it was attached to the name because the researchers' findings **could be the first discovery of a pterosaur with an opposed thumb**.

- It could likely be the earliest-known instance of the limb.

- It is **far older than the one identified in 2019.**

- Paleontologists had identified that species as **a pterosaur that lived over 77 million years ago** in what is **Western Canada** today.
- Named **Cryodrakon boreas**, it was believed to be one of the largest flying animals, which “flew over the heads of dinosaurs”, with a wingspan of **over 10 metres.**

- **Opposability of the Thumb:**

- **About:**

- Opposability of the thumb is defined as being able to “**simultaneously flex, abduct and medially rotate the thumb**” in a way that one is able to bring the tip of the thumb to touch the tips of the other fingers.
- Along with humans, some ancient monkeys and apes also had opposable thumbs.
- Humans, however, have a **relatively longer** and **distally placed thumb**, and larger **thumb muscles.**

- This means that humans’ tip-to-tip precision grip when holding smaller objects is superior to non-human primates. This is the reason that humans are able to **hold a pen, unscrew an earring stopper, or put a thread through a needle hole.**

- **Monkeydactyl and Opposability of the Thumb:**

- The research team scanned the fossil of *K. antipollicatus* using micro-computed tomography (micro-CT), a technique making use of X-ray to image an object.
- By studying its forelimb morphology and musculature, they suggest that *K. antipollicatus* could have used its hand for grasping, which is likely an adaptation for **arboreal life** (living in trees).
- The grasping hands of primates developed as a result of their life in the trees — an opposable thumb made it easier for the common ancestor of all primates to cling on to tree branches.

[Source:IE](#)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/monkeydactyl-pterosaur-species>