

Ancient Lizards Had Advanced Hearing

Fossils suggest that ancient lizards had advanced hearing.

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The earliest evidence of modern ears in terrestrial vertebrates has been discovered in reptile fossils from central Russia.

The reptiles may have been among the first nocturnal vertebrates, using their advanced hearing and large eyes to communicate with each other and hunt insect prey at night.

The reptiles lived 260 million years ago, during the Permian period, which lasted from 299 to 251 million years ago, according to the National Geographic report. That's about 50 million years earlier than modern ears were thought to have developed in terrestrial vertebrates.

"The fact that they evolved a modern ear emphasizes that the ecosystems in the Permian period were advanced," lead author Johannes Müller of Humboldt University in Berlin told National Geographic.

The ears were found in six fossils of different species of para-reptiles, small, lizardlike animals about 1.5 feet long (0.45 meter long). All the reptiles had a true middle ear, which allowed them to hear a range of frequencies.

"It is the oldest evidence of advanced hearing in any land animal that lays a hard-shelled egg," he told National Geographic. The ancient reptiles' advanced hearing apparatus was very similar to that of modern reptiles.

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