

Kodiak's Longrich Discovers Another Extinct Creature

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

You may have heard about this on NPR News this (Tuesday) morning.

A Yale paleontologist from Kodiak has discovered a previously unidentified fossilized lizard that lived and died with the dinosaurs 65-million years ago. Monday, Nick Longrich published a study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences showing that the Chicxulub asteroid collision which killed all the dinosaurs, also had a devastating effect on snakes and lizards, including seven newly identified lizard species and two snakes.

Longrich named one of those lizards "Obamadon gracilis," after the president. The suffix "odon" is Greek for tooth, and the lizard has tall, straight teeth, like President Obama. Longrich said he likely would have chosen a different name if the presidential election had turned out differently. He says Obamadon likely measured less than one foot in length and probably ate insects.

Longrich said that there is no political significance to naming Obamadon after the president, adding he "was just having fun with taxonomy."

Obamadon is not the first extinct critter Longrich has named. He has discovered a handful of dinosaurs, including Albertonykus Borealis, Hesperonychus and two kinds of triceratops, one of which he named "Mojo-ceratop." He is also the paleontologist who discovered the presence of wings on the hind limbs of Archaeopteryx, a rather famous fossil which showed modern birds are the descendants of dinosaurs.