



Press release

State Museum of Natural History Stuttgart, Germany

A Triassic stem-salamander from Kyrgyzstan and the origin of salamanders

Stuttgart, Germany, 11.05.2020. The origin of extant amphibians (frogs, salamanders and caecilians) remains largely obscure. This results from the long evolutionary history of the group (330 million years) as well as their tiny size, which makes their fossil preservation difficult. A new find from Kyrgyzstan in Inner Asia has now been recognized as most ancient salamander in the world.

Paleontologists from Germany, Dr. Rainer Schoch – expert on fossil amphibians and early reptiles at the State Museum of Natural History, Stuttgart –, Dr. Ralf Werneburg and Dr. Sebastian Voigt were able to show in a paper appearing on May 11, 2020 that the new, 220 million year old Kyrgyz fossil and an existing skeleton in a Moscow collection pertain to the same species, *Triassurus sixtelae*.

Based on new data on the recent discovery, *Triassurus* reveals diagnostic salamander features that make the Kyrgyz species the oldest and most primitive salamander. Besides salamander features, *Triassurus* also shares characters with ancient amphibians, pointing at the origin of all modern amphibians. *Triassurus* dwelled a freshwater lake millions of years before the first dinosaurs appeared on Earth.

The paper is published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

Publication:

Rainer R. Schoch, Ralf Werneburg & Sebastian Voigt: A Triassic stem-salamander from Kyrgyzstan and the origin of salamanders in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

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For the media:

Media Contact

Dr. Rainer Schoch

Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Germany

Tel. 0711/89 36-143, Mobil: 0151-74516380

E-Mail: rainer.schoch@smns-bw.de

www.naturkundemuseum-bw.de

Dr. Ralf Werneburg

Naturhistorisches Museum Schleusingen, Germany

E-Mail: werneburg@museum-schleusingen.de

www.museum-schleusingen.de

Dr. Sebastian Voigt,

Urweltmuseum Geoskop, Germany

E-Mail: csebastian.voigt@gmail.com

www.urweltmuseum-geoskop.de

Meike Rech (Press)

Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Germany

Tel: +49 (0)711- 89 36-107, E-mail: meike.rech@smns-bw.de

Lisa-Marie App (Press)

Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Germany

Tel: +49 (0)711- 89 36-106, E-mail: lisamarie.app@smns-bw.de

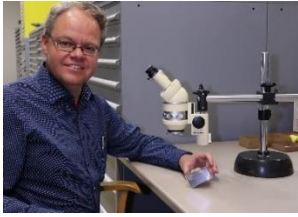
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Dr. Rainer Schoch with the prehistoric salamander *Triassurus sixtelae*.

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Dr. Rainer Schoch with the prehistoric salamander *Triassurus sixtelae*.
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220 million year old Kyrgyz fossil of *Triassurus sixtelae*.
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Fossil of *Triassurus sixtelae*.
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