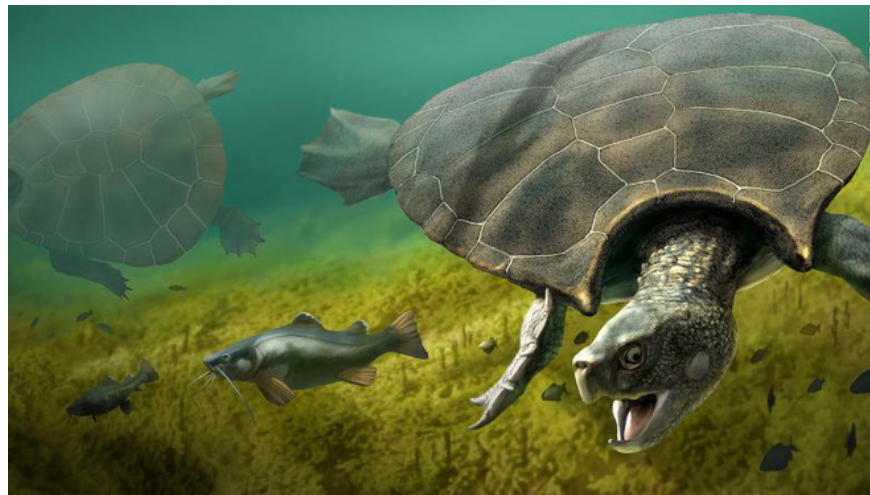


# The largest freshwater turtle ever existed with a length of up to 3 meters, a shell weighing over 1 ton

Scientists discovered fossils of giant tortoises that lived in South America 10 million years ago.

Scientists have discovered the apricot of *Stupendemys geographicus*, the largest turtle ever to exist. About 10 million years ago, this giant tortoise swam around in freshwater wetlands in South America. They have nearly 3 meters long apricot and weighs up to 1,100 kg. Compared to this size, humans are tiny.



By studying fossils of turtle shells and lower chin fossils, scientists discovered the horns of horned males to protect their skulls. Despite their enormous size, there are huge bite marks on the shell that show that predators, including giant ancient crocodiles, did not hesitate in front of the tortoise's large shield.

Fossils of turtle shells are found in Venezuela and Colombia. The tortoise was first described in 1976 by paleontologist Roger Wood; He named the name "Stupendemys" meaning "big tortoise", and geographicus to recognize the support of the National Geographic Society for turtle fossil research. The information was provided by Edwin Cadena, author of the scientific report on the tortoise, geologist and vertebrate paleontologist at Del Rosario University in Colombia.

The scientific report on the *Stupendemys geographicus* turtle was published in Science Advances.



Edwin Cadena next to the turtle shell fossils

The fossils show the enormous size of the turtle, as well as the large horn on its shell close to the neck. The horn helps the male tortoise protect his skull as he fights with other males - female turtles do not have this feature.

Cadena was surprised to find that the lower chin fossil belongs to this species. *"For decades, we searched and waited to find such things,"* he said.

The lower chin fossils help scientists solve another tortoise puzzle, which provides information about their diet. According to Cadena, their food is diverse, including fish, crocodiles, snakes, molluscs and seeds.

Although the area they used to live in is now desert, a few million years ago, it was a wet, freshwater swampy area with many different species of creatures. And that is the perfect environment for this giant tortoise, helping them to reach *"incredible size"* .



Fossil size of turtle shells compared to normal people

*"They are one of the largest, or possibly the largest, species of turtles that ever existed , "* said Marcelo Sánchez, co-author of the report and director at the University of Zurich's Museum of Paleontology.

Although they do not know the reason for their extinction, scientists know that their habitat was destroyed when the Andes rose and divided the three rivers of the Amazon, Orinoco and Magdalena.

By studying this species, the scientists clarified the evolution of the tortoise and identified the closest living relative of *Stupendemys* as the large-headed turtle in the Amazon River. Although this breed is a hundred times smaller than that of the other turtle, their diet is similar.

*"It shows us that very large tortoise shells are found not only in sea turtles, but also in freshwater turtles , "* Cadena said.

*"One of the apricot shells we describe in this report is the largest tortoise shell ever known in evolutionary history. These discoveries help us better understand the evolution of the turtles living on the side of evolution." The North American continent and the way they interacted with other large animals lived in that area 13 million years ago . "*

Cadena will look for other turtle fossils in the northern continental region of South America to discover more about their origin, evolution, and their connection to other turtle species.

*"The ability to interpret the unique way of life and the biological aspect of this unique giant tortoise is an interesting project , "* Cadena said. *"And understanding the evolutionary history of extant species is critical to developing essential plans and education about their conservation . "*

*According to CNN*

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