

Fossil of first 'giant dinosaur' species found in Argentina

New finding: An investigator working on the extraction of the remains of a giant dinosaur from the Balde de Leyes formation, Argentina; and right, a reconstruction of *Ingentia prima*. | Photo Credit: [HO](#)

Giant dinosaurs lived on the earth much earlier than previously thought, according to a team of excavators in Argentina, who discovered the remains of a 200-million-year old species.

The species, baptised *Ingentia prima*, was about three times the size of the largest Triassic dinosaurs from its era. It was discovered in the Balde de Leyes dig site in San Juan province, 1,100 km west of the Argentine capital Buenos Aires.

The finding was published in the *Nature Ecology & Evolution* journal on Monday. "As soon as we found it, we realised it was something different. We found a shape, the first giant one among all the dinosaurs. That's the surprise," said Cecilia Apaldetti, a government and San Juan University researcher.

Excavators found several vertebrae from the neck and tail as well as fore and hind leg bones. The species "exhibits a growth strategy that was unknown until now and indicates that gigantism originated much earlier than was thought," said Ms. Apaldetti, the study's co-author.

These were "herbivore dinosaurs, quadrupeds, easily recognisable by their very long neck and tail, and from the sauropod group," she added. Before this discovery, it was thought that gigantism developed during the Jurassic period, around 180 million years ago.

Fellow co-author Ricardo Martinez believes the *Ingenia prima* is from "a Late Triassic period, possibly 205 million years" ago.

The Triassic period extended from around 250-200 million years ago and the Jurassic from 200-145 million years ago.

According to scientists, *Ingenia prima* was the first dinosaur species to reach gigantism.

The dinosaur's bone fragments displayed cyclical and seasonal growth, with a different kind of tissue to other sauropods, which allowed it to grow very quickly. It's believed that the species grew to eight to 10 meters tall and weighed around 10 tonnes, equal to two or three African elephants.

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