

For Luiz Eduardo Anelli, a paleontologist not involved in the discovery or description of the *Vespersaurus paranaensis*, it's the dinosaur's feet that make it such a fascinating find. In true monodactyls, he says, like horses and ancient kangaroos, the extra toes were lost during the course of evolution.

"The kangaroo became a monodactyl to be able to jump, while the horse was able to increase its agility and speed, making it easier to escape predators and go on long journeys," he says, citing those same reasons as possible explanations for the new dinosaurs walking on one toe as well.

"The monodactyly reveals so much, including the anatomical diversity of these animals, which reflects their different ways of life," he says. "Dinosaurs had adaptations to dig burrows, glide, climb, swim, fish, open furrows in the ground for their eggs, run, fly. They were extraordinary animals."

First find

While Brazil had already confirmed that some 40 different species of dinosaur roamed its land tens of millions of years ago, the southern state of Paraná, where the museum is located in a town of just 20,000 people, had never had such a discovery. The paleontological dig site in Cruzeiro do Oeste had already turned up other types of fossils, including bones from a *Gueragama sulamericana* lizard and several individuals from the pterosaur species *Caiuajara dobruskii*, but this was the first concrete indication that a dinosaur had set foot here.

And with 40 percent of its skeleton complete, the *Vespersaurus paranaensis* has already brought experts an exceptional amount of new information. But for Martins, its discovery is just the beginning.

"We could still find more new species—which is something I expect to do and imagine we will do—and more information, more details, about our dinosaur," she says. "We still have a lot to study, even looking just at that same block. We were able to describe our dinosaur and confirm that it is a unique species in the world, but that doesn't mean we're finished. Our work continues."

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