

Small Wonder

Scientists discover the remains of a mini flying animal in China.

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a ... tiny flying **reptile**? Scientists recently discovered the fossil of a sparrow-sized creature in China. A reptile is an animal that crawls or slithers, has scales or bony plates, and lays eggs. The fossil is a **pterosaur** (TER-uh-sor). Pterosaurs were flying reptiles that had wings made of skin. It was also a pterodactyl (ter-uh-DAK-tuhl). A pterodactyl is an **extinct** type of pterosaur that lived millions of years ago. To be extinct means to have died out completely.

The reptile is named *Nemicolopterus crypticus* (nem-i-coh-LOP-ter-uss CRIP-ti-cuss). It is little, but it may set a big record. Scientists say it is the smallest toothless pterosaur ever found!

Nemicolopterus had a 9.8-inch **wingspan**. A wingspan is the distance from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. The reptile also had a sharp, pointy beak and curved, birdlike claws.

The reptile's small size may have had advantages. Scientists say being small may have allowed *Nemicolopterus* to hide from animals that eat other animals. Its size may have also helped it find food. Because it was small, the reptile could "be [quicker] to catch insects," scientist Xiaolin Wang told *WR News*. Wang was on the team that discovered the pterosaur.

Scientists plan to study the reptile's fossil in more detail. They hope it will offer clues about how pterosaurs changed over time. "They are ancestors of the large pterosaurs," Wang says.

Pterosaur Types

Pterosaurs ranged in size from as small as a bird to as big as an airplane. Here are three different kinds of pterosaurs.

Dimorphodon: This pterosaur's wingspan was about 4 feet. It also had a huge head, and its legs could stretch out.

Pteranodon: This pterosaur was about 6 feet long with a wingspan of 20 to 25 feet. *Pteranodon* weighed about 25 pounds.

Quetzalcoatlus: This is the largest pterosaur ever found. Its wingspan was about 40 feet. It also had a long, thin beak.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is the relationship between pterosaurs and pterodactyls, according to the text?

- A A pterosaur can fly but a pterodactyl cannot.
- B A pterodactyl is a kind of pterosaur.
- C A pterosaur is a type of pterodactyl.
- D A pterosaur had wings made of skin but a pterodactyl did not.

2. Which of the following does the author describe last in the passage?

- A The author describes the recent discovery of a fossil in China.
- B The author describes the advantages to being as small as *Nemicolopterus* was.
- C The author describes several different types of pterosaurs.
- D The author describes how scientists plan to study the fossil.

3. It can be inferred from the passage that

- A not all pterosaurs could fly
- B pterosaurs were very scary creatures
- C pterosaurs do not exist on the Earth today
- D pterosaurs are the most interesting kind of reptile

4. Read the following sentences: "The reptile's small size may have had advantages. Scientists say being small may have allowed [it] to hide from animals that eat other animals."

In this sentence, the word **advantages** means

- A benefits
- B problems
- C details
- D clues

5. This passage is mostly about

- A how to find a fossil of a tiny reptile in China
- B the differences between large and small flying reptiles
- C the decision to study the fossil of a tiny flying reptile
- D the recent discovery of the fossil of a tiny flying reptile

6. What fossil did scientists recently find in China?

7. What is a difference between the pterosaurs *Quetzalcoatlus* and *Nemicolopterus*?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Scientists plan to study the fossil they found _____ they hope to find clues about changes in pterosaurs over time.

- A because
- B but
- C however
- D although

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Scientists discovered the fossil of a small bird-like creature in China.

Who? scientists

(did) What? _____

Where? _____

10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: ancestor (an • ces • tor): an animal or a person in the past that a later animal or person is descended from.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline the word **ancestor**.

1. My ancestors came to the United States in a boat because airplanes were not yet invented.
2. Some say that apes are the ancient ancestors of humans.
3. Many people are interested in family history and try to learn more about their ancestors.
4. Many African-Americans, including President and Mrs. Obama, have ancestors who were slaves.
5. My great-great-grandfather is one of my ancestors.

10b. Which person looks like he may be someone's ancestor?



11. Would your father be an example of one of your ancestors? Why or why not?
