

This ancient whale had four legs, hooves and could live on land or in water.

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The fossil of an ancient, four-legged whale with hooves uncovered in Peru gives scientists new insights into the evolution of the aquatic mammals, research published Thursday suggests. (A. Gennari/Current Biology)

The fossil of an ancient, **four-legged** whale with hooves uncovered in Peru gives scientists new insights into the evolution of the aquatic mammals, research published Thursday suggests.

An international team of paleontologists made the discovery in a coastal desert in southern Peru in 2011 and have since named the ancient whale *Peregocetus pacificus*, meaning, "the traveling whale that reached the Pacific."

"This is the first indisputable record of a **quadrupedal** whale skeleton for the whole Pacific Ocean, probably the oldest for the Americas, and the most complete outside India and Pakistan," study author Olivier Lambert of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences said in a statement.

The research, published in the peer-reviewed journal Current Biology, describes the 42.6-million-year-old animal as being able to live on both **land and water**.

The ancient whale was roughly 13 feet long, and its **hooves** were located on the tips of its fingers and toes, the study says. The animal also likely had **webbed appendages**.

Researchers described an animal that likely moved in the water similar to an otter, based on its bone structure in **tail vertebrae**, the study shows.

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