



DID YOU KNOW...?

At about 110 million years old, 'Lightning Claw' appears to be the oldest megaraptorid known, about 12 million years older than the next found in Australia.



In 2015, a major discovery took place, this time not of a human relative, but a new species of dinosaur. Dr Phil Bell, from UNE's Palaeoscience Research Centre, led the inquiry with the help of the Australian Opal Centre.

The yet-to-be-officially-named beast belongs to a group of large carnivorous theropods called megaraptorids. The nicknamed 'Lightning Claw' – after its place of discovery, Lightning Ridge, and its giant talons – grew close to 7m in length, making it the largest discovered in Australia.

"It was obviously a predator but the key thing about this guy is the giant claws on its hands, which compensate for its dainty skull and slender jaw," Dr Bell says. "This dinosaur probably ran down its prey and used its arms like grappling hooks."

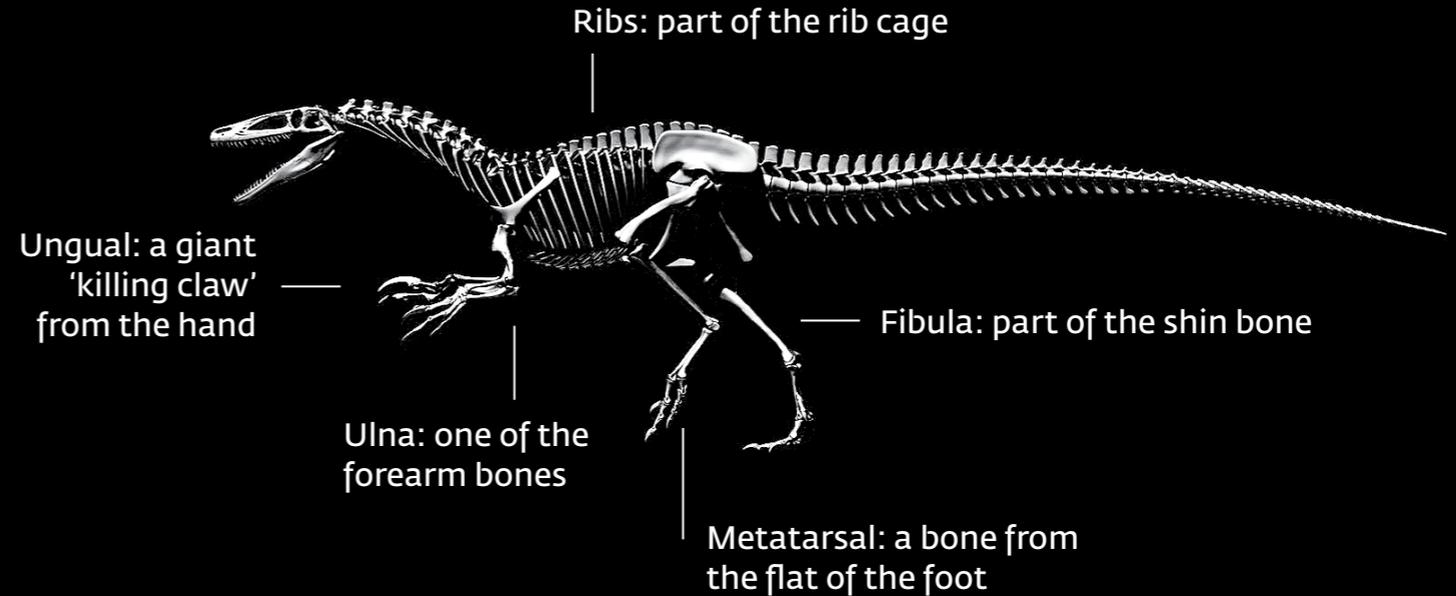
The find in 2015 is both the first major dinosaur discovery since three species were identified in Queensland in 1999 and the first substantial dinosaur remains ever from NSW.

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'LIGHTNING CLAW'

This dinosaur belongs to a group of carnivorous theropods called megaraptorids (meaning "huge thief"). Megaraptorids are best known from South America but also Australia. This is the only theropod (carnivorous dinosaur) from New South Wales known from more than a single bone and the largest of its kind in Australia. Bones of Lightning Claw were recovered from an opal mine in Lightning Ridge and donated to the Australian Opal Centre by opal miners Rob and Debbie Brogan.

An international team led by UNE scientists studied the opalised bones, which included several partial ribs, an ulna (forearm bone), a metatarsal (foot bone), a piece of the ilium (hips) and the giant 'killing claw' on the hand, to determine it likely belonged to a new, as yet unnamed species.



VITAL DETAILS

Family:	Megaraptoridae
Genus / species:	unnamed
Length:	7m
Age:	102 Million years
Diet:	meat, including smaller dinosaurs
Location:	Lightning Ridge, NSW
Discovered by:	Rob and Debbie Brogan

To view the original opalised bones of 'Lightning Claw', visit the Australian Opal Centre in Lightning Ridge

Thank you to Australian Age of Dinosaurs