

Reporting Summary

Nature Portfolio wishes to improve the reproducibility of the work that we publish. This form provides structure for consistency and transparency in reporting. For further information on Nature Portfolio policies, see our [Editorial Policies](#) and the [Editorial Policy Checklist](#).

Statistics

For all statistical analyses, confirm that the following items are present in the figure legend, table legend, main text, or Methods section.

n/a	Confirmed
☐	☐ The exact sample size (<i>n</i>) for each experimental group/condition, given as a discrete number and unit of measurement
☐	☐ A statement on whether measurements were taken from distinct samples or whether the same sample was measured repeatedly
☐	☐ The statistical test(s) used AND whether they are one- or two-sided <i>Only common tests should be described solely by name; describe more complex techniques in the Methods section.</i>
☐	☐ A description of all covariates tested
☐	☐ A description of any assumptions or corrections, such as tests of normality and adjustment for multiple comparisons
☐	☐ A full description of the statistical parameters including central tendency (e.g. means) or other basic estimates (e.g. regression coefficient) AND variation (e.g. standard deviation) or associated estimates of uncertainty (e.g. confidence intervals)
☐	☐ For null hypothesis testing, the test statistic (e.g. <i>F</i> , <i>t</i> , <i>r</i>) with confidence intervals, effect sizes, degrees of freedom and <i>P</i> value noted <i>Give P values as exact values whenever suitable.</i>
☐	☐ For Bayesian analysis, information on the choice of priors and Markov chain Monte Carlo settings
☐	☐ For hierarchical and complex designs, identification of the appropriate level for tests and full reporting of outcomes
☐	☐ Estimates of effect sizes (e.g. Cohen's <i>d</i> , Pearson's <i>r</i>), indicating how they were calculated

Our web collection on [statistics for biologists](#) contains articles on many of the points above.

Software and code

Policy information about [availability of computer code](#)

Data collection	Tooth Measurements are based on measurement in Meshlab (www.meshlab.net) Measurements of skull and skeletal elements are based on CT scan rendering for those parts that can be scanned. For those parts that could not be scanned, the measurements are directly from the exposed skeletal elements soft-tissue outlines, many of which were clearly visible in XRF photography. The fossil specimen is split between two slabs and both the slab and counter-slab are thick and large. CT Scans are only possible for those parts already separated by natural fractures. The parts that lack such fractures are too large to be CT scanned. For the parts that are not possible to be scanned, the measurements are directly from exposed elements. The usable CT Scans are fully segmented and presented in text figures, in extended data figures and in supplementary videos, and described fully in the supplementary information.
Data analysis	CT Scans are obtained on the Nikon X-Tek XT H225 CT scanner at China University of Geosciences (Beijing). Segmentation of CT scans was done in Mimics (www.materialise.com). Segmented data were exported to videos and 3D models in Stereolithography (Stl) format for postprocessing in Meshlab (www.meshlab.net). For post-segmentation image processing, surface files were re-articulated using Autodesk Maya or Blender (www.blender.org). Maximum parsimony analyses for phylogenetics are mostly by PAUP* v.4.0a169 https://paup.phylosolutions.com/get-paup/. The tree supports (Bremer Index and Bootstrap values) are estimated by PAUP and TNT (Tree analysis using New Technology) (www.lillo.org.ar/phylogeny/tnt/). Additionally, we also estimated the phylogenetic relationships by MrBayes package (MrBayes -Bayesian Inference of Phylogeny: https://nbisweden.github.io/MrBayes/). For all phylogenetic analyses, the full character list and the nexus matrix are included in supplementary information. The full results of PAUP analyses are presented in PAUP log in the Supplementary Information.

For manuscripts utilizing custom algorithms or software that are central to the research but not yet described in published literature, software must be made available to editors and reviewers. We strongly encourage code deposition in a community repository (e.g. GitHub). See the Nature Portfolio [guidelines for submitting code & software](#) for further information.

Data

Policy information about [availability of data](#)

All manuscripts must include a [data availability statement](#). This statement should provide the following information, where applicable:

- Accession codes, unique identifiers, or web links for publicly available datasets
- A description of any restrictions on data availability
- For clinical datasets or third party data, please ensure that the statement adheres to our [policy](#)

All anatomical data of new fossil specimen, and the comparative information for its analysis are presented in Supplementary Information.

Research involving human participants, their data, or biological material

Policy information about studies with [human participants or human data](#). See also policy information about [sex, gender \(identity/presentation\), and sexual orientation](#) and [race, ethnicity and racism](#).

Reporting on sex and gender

Use the terms sex (biological attribute) and gender (shaped by social and cultural circumstances) carefully in order to avoid confusing both terms. Indicate if findings apply to only one sex or gender; describe whether sex and gender were considered in study design; whether sex and/or gender was determined based on self-reporting or assigned and methods used. Provide in the source data disaggregated sex and gender data, where this information has been collected, and if consent has been obtained for sharing of individual-level data; provide overall numbers in this Reporting Summary. Please state if this information has not been collected. Report sex- and gender-based analyses where performed, justify reasons for lack of sex- and gender-based analysis.

Reporting on race, ethnicity, or other socially relevant groupings

Please specify the socially constructed or socially relevant categorization variable(s) used in your manuscript and explain why they were used. Please note that such variables should not be used as proxies for other socially constructed/relevant variables (for example, race or ethnicity should not be used as a proxy for socioeconomic status). Provide clear definitions of the relevant terms used, how they were provided (by the participants/respondents, the researchers, or third parties), and the method(s) used to classify people into the different categories (e.g. self-report, census or administrative data, social media data, etc.) Please provide details about how you controlled for confounding variables in your analyses.

Population characteristics

Describe the covariate-relevant population characteristics of the human research participants (e.g. age, genotypic information, past and current diagnosis and treatment categories). If you filled out the behavioural & social sciences study design questions and have nothing to add here, write "See above."

Recruitment

Describe how participants were recruited. Outline any potential self-selection bias or other biases that may be present and how these are likely to impact results.

Ethics oversight

Identify the organization(s) that approved the study protocol.

Note that full information on the approval of the study protocol must also be provided in the manuscript.

Field-specific reporting

Please select the one below that is the best fit for your research. If you are not sure, read the appropriate sections before making your selection.

☐ Life sciences ☐ Behavioural & social sciences ☒ Ecological, evolutionary & environmental sciences

For a reference copy of the document with all sections, see [nature.com/documents/nr-reporting-summary-flat.pdf](https://www.nature.com/documents/nr-reporting-summary-flat.pdf)

Ecological, evolutionary & environmental sciences study design

All studies must disclose on these points even when the disclosure is negative.

Study description

Reporting and description of a new fossil docodontan species, musculoskeletal reconstruction of this new species, analysis of its phylogenetic position among all docodontans and its immediate outgroups, and comparative functional morphological interpretation of the fossil.

Research sample

Only one holotype specimen (PMOL-AM00027A-B) is available for this study. For phylogenetic analysis, 20 valid taxa of docodontans are included, plus nine additional outgroups

Sampling strategy

The 29 taxa in the parsimony analysis were selected because they have been already used in the historical (Luo and Martin 2007; Averianov et al. 2010) or recent phylogenetic studies of docodontans (Zhou et al. 2019; Panciroli et al. 2019; Averianov et al. 2024; Panciroli et al. 2024; Patrocínio et al. 2025). These are the better preserved fossils that can be reasonably scored into the matrix and they are relevant to the phylogenetic test of the new fossil we aim to study.

Data collection

The holotype specimen was acquired by Paleontological Museum of Liaoning (Shenyang, China) and curated by Yikun Li and Honggang Zhang. CT scanning was conducted by Chang-Fu Zhou with the staff at China University of Geosciences (Beijing). Field

geology of fossil site was assessed by Chang-Fu Zhou, Honggang Zhang and Yikun Li. CT segmentation and image analyses and the movie for presentation are by April Neander. Fossil specimen interpretation by Chang-Fu Zhou, Thomas Martina, April Neander, Peishu Li, and Zhe-Xi Luo. Anatomical interpretation and musculoskeletal reconstruction by Peishu Li and Zhe-Xi Luo, comparative anatomy by Peishu Li and Zhe-Xi Luo. Functional comparison to extant mammals by Thomas Martin and Zhe-Xi Luo. Phylogenetic character list by Zhe-Xi Luo and Thomas Martin; Maximum Parsimony analyses are by Yikun Li and Zhe-Xi Luo; Bayesian Analysis by Yikun Li. All description of anatomy and musculoskeletal reconstruction, and all phylogenetic results are presented in supplementary information.

Timing and spatial scale	The fossil site is estimated to be 168-163 Ma (megaannum). Docodontan group ranges from the Early Jurassic to Mid Cretaceous. Stratigraphical information of this new fossil is reported in Supplementary Information. Paleogeographic distribution – The holotype of this fossil is from the Middle Jurassic Haifanggou Formation in Inner Mongolia Region, China. Docodontans as a group are known from all Laurasian continents (including the Greenland) during the Jurassic; also from UK and Asia during Cretaceous.
Data exclusions	No data were excluded.
Reproducibility	All anatomical data are presented in Supplementary Information. To reproduce the phylogenetic results, the readers can access the nexus file and PAUP results in Supplementary Information.
Randomization	No randomization in this analysis
Blinding	There is no element of blinding in this analysis.
Did the study involve field work?	☒ Yes ☐ No

Field work, collection and transport

Field conditions	<i>Describe the study conditions for field work, providing relevant parameters (e.g. temperature, rainfall).</i>
Location	The fossil specimen was collected from the Haifanggou Formation (Bathonian) at the Xiayingzi Fossil Locality (119°13'00"E/41°18'20"N), in the Daohugou Village Area, Ningcheng County, Inner Mongolia Region, China. From our field geology investigation, The Xiayingzi Fossil Locality belongs to Bed 4 of the Haifanggou Formation, and the locality is stratigraphically below Bed 9 of the Haifanggou Formation that yielded the Castorocauda specimens at the Daohugou Fossil Museum locality. The stratigraphical level of the Xiayingzi Locality (Haifanggou Fm. Bed 4) is separated by 60 meters of sediments from the Haifanggou Fm. Bed 9. The holotype is catalogued to be PMOL-AM00026, and curated at Paleontological Museum of Liaoning (PMOL), Shenyang Normal University, Shenyang, Liaoning, China.
Access & import/export	The holotype specimen is permanently curated in Paleontological Museum of Liaoning (Shenyang, China), and microscopic examination of fossil occurred in PMOL and SDUST. CT Scans were done in China University of Geosciences (Beijing). CT data analyses were in PMOL, SDUST and UChicago; no export of the specimen involved.
Disturbance	No disturbance

Reporting for specific materials, systems and methods

We require information from authors about some types of materials, experimental systems and methods used in many studies. Here, indicate whether each material, system or method listed is relevant to your study. If you are not sure if a list item applies to your research, read the appropriate section before selecting a response.

Materials & experimental systems

n/a	Involved in the study
☐	☐ Antibodies
☐	☐ Eukaryotic cell lines
☐	☐ Palaeontology and archaeology
☐	☐ Animals and other organisms
☐	☐ Clinical data
☐	☐ Dual use research of concern
☐	☐ Plants

Methods

n/a	Involved in the study
☐	☐ ChIP-seq
☐	☐ Flow cytometry
☐	☐ MRI-based neuroimaging

Antibodies

Antibodies used	<i>Describe all antibodies used in the study; as applicable, provide supplier name, catalog number, clone name, and lot number.</i>
Validation	<i>Describe the validation of each primary antibody for the species and application, noting any validation statements on the manufacturer's website, relevant citations, antibody profiles in online databases, or data provided in the manuscript.</i>

Eukaryotic cell lines

Policy information about [cell lines and Sex and Gender in Research](#)

Cell line source(s)	State the source of each cell line used and the sex of all primary cell lines and cells derived from human participants or vertebrate models.
Authentication	Describe the authentication procedures for each cell line used OR declare that none of the cell lines used were authenticated.
Mycoplasma contamination	Confirm that all cell lines tested negative for mycoplasma contamination OR describe the results of the testing for mycoplasma contamination OR declare that the cell lines were not tested for mycoplasma contamination.
Commonly misidentified lines (See ICLAC register)	Name any commonly misidentified cell lines used in the study and provide a rationale for their use.

Palaeontology and Archaeology

Specimen provenance	The new fossil specimen was collected from the Haifanggou Formation (Bathonian) at the Xiayingzi Fossil Locality (119°13'00"E/41°18'20"N), in the Daohugou Village Area, Ningcheng County, Inner Mongolia Region, China. The provenance was authenticated by Chang-Fu Zhou (SDUST), Yikun Li and Honggang Zhang (PMOL).
Specimen deposition	The holotype is catalogued to be PMOL-AM00026, and curated at Paleontological Museum of Liaoning (PMOL), Shenyang Normal University, Shenyang, Liaoning, China.
Dating methods	This study does not provide new geochronological dating of this site. The study adopted the geochronology estimates of the Haifanggou Formation by Y-Q Liu et al. (2012) and D-Y Huang (2019).
☐ Tick this box to confirm that the raw and calibrated dates are available in the paper or in Supplementary Information.	
Ethics oversight	Identify the organization(s) that approved or provided guidance on the study protocol, OR state that no ethical approval or guidance was required and explain why not.

Note that full information on the approval of the study protocol must also be provided in the manuscript.

Animals and other research organisms

Policy information about [studies involving animals](#); ARRIVE guidelines recommended for reporting animal research, and [Sex and Gender in Research](#)

Laboratory animals	For laboratory animals, report species, strain and age OR state that the study did not involve laboratory animals.
Wild animals	Provide details on animals observed in or captured in the field; report species and age where possible. Describe how animals were caught and transported and what happened to captive animals after the study (if killed, explain why and describe method; if released, say where and when) OR state that the study did not involve wild animals.
Reporting on sex	Indicate if findings apply to only one sex; describe whether sex was considered in study design, methods used for assigning sex. Provide data disaggregated for sex where this information has been collected in the source data as appropriate; provide overall numbers in this Reporting Summary. Please state if this information has not been collected. Report sex-based analyses where performed, justify reasons for lack of sex-based analysis.
Field-collected samples	For laboratory work with field-collected samples, describe all relevant parameters such as housing, maintenance, temperature, photoperiod and end-of-experiment protocol OR state that the study did not involve samples collected from the field.
Ethics oversight	Identify the organization(s) that approved or provided guidance on the study protocol, OR state that no ethical approval or guidance was required and explain why not.

Note that full information on the approval of the study protocol must also be provided in the manuscript.

Clinical data

Policy information about [clinical studies](#)

All manuscripts should comply with the ICMJE [guidelines for publication of clinical research](#) and a completed [CONSORT checklist](#) must be included with all submissions.

Clinical trial registration	Provide the trial registration number from ClinicalTrials.gov or an equivalent agency.
Study protocol	Note where the full trial protocol can be accessed OR if not available, explain why.
Data collection	Describe the settings and locales of data collection, noting the time periods of recruitment and data collection.

Outcomes

Describe how you pre-defined primary and secondary outcome measures and how you assessed these measures.

Dual use research of concern

Policy information about [dual use research of concern](#)

Hazards

Could the accidental, deliberate or reckless misuse of agents or technologies generated in the work, or the application of information presented in the manuscript, pose a threat to:

No Yes

- ☐ ☐ Public health
- ☐ ☐ National security
- ☐ ☐ Crops and/or livestock
- ☐ ☐ Ecosystems
- ☐ ☐ Any other significant area

Experiments of concern

Does the work involve any of these experiments of concern:

No Yes

- ☐ ☐ Demonstrate how to render a vaccine ineffective
- ☐ ☐ Confer resistance to therapeutically useful antibiotics or antiviral agents
- ☐ ☐ Enhance the virulence of a pathogen or render a nonpathogen virulent
- ☐ ☐ Increase transmissibility of a pathogen
- ☐ ☐ Alter the host range of a pathogen
- ☐ ☐ Enable evasion of diagnostic/detection modalities
- ☐ ☐ Enable the weaponization of a biological agent or toxin
- ☐ ☐ Any other potentially harmful combination of experiments and agents

Plants

Seed stocks

Report on the source of all seed stocks or other plant material used. If applicable, state the seed stock centre and catalogue number. If plant specimens were collected from the field, describe the collection location, date and sampling procedures.

Novel plant genotypes

Describe the methods by which all novel plant genotypes were produced. This includes those generated by transgenic approaches, gene editing, chemical/radiation-based mutagenesis and hybridization. For transgenic lines, describe the transformation method, the number of independent lines analyzed and the generation upon which experiments were performed. For gene-edited lines, describe the editor used, the endogenous sequence targeted for editing, the targeting guide RNA sequence (if applicable) and how the editor was applied.

Authentication

Describe any authentication procedures for each seed stock used or novel genotype generated. Describe any experiments used to assess the effect of a mutation and, where applicable, how potential secondary effects (e.g. second site T-DNA insertions, mosaicism, off-target gene editing) were examined.

ChIP-seq

Data deposition

- ☐ Confirm that both raw and final processed data have been deposited in a public database such as [GEO](#).
- ☐ Confirm that you have deposited or provided access to graph files (e.g. BED files) for the called peaks.

Data access links

May remain private before publication.

For "Initial submission" or "Revised version" documents, provide reviewer access links. For your "Final submission" document, provide a link to the deposited data.

Files in database submission

Provide a list of all files available in the database submission.

Genome browser session
(e.g. [UCSC](#))

Provide a link to an anonymized genome browser session for "Initial submission" and "Revised version" documents only, to enable peer review. Write "no longer applicable" for "Final submission" documents.

Methodology

Replicates	<i>Describe the experimental replicates, specifying number, type and replicate agreement.</i>
Sequencing depth	<i>Describe the sequencing depth for each experiment, providing the total number of reads, uniquely mapped reads, length of reads and whether they were paired- or single-end.</i>
Antibodies	<i>Describe the antibodies used for the ChIP-seq experiments; as applicable, provide supplier name, catalog number, clone name, and lot number.</i>
Peak calling parameters	<i>Specify the command line program and parameters used for read mapping and peak calling, including the ChIP, control and index files used.</i>
Data quality	<i>Describe the methods used to ensure data quality in full detail, including how many peaks are at FDR 5% and above 5-fold enrichment.</i>
Software	<i>Describe the software used to collect and analyze the ChIP-seq data. For custom code that has been deposited into a community repository, provide accession details.</i>

Flow Cytometry

Plots

Confirm that:

- ☐ The axis labels state the marker and fluorochrome used (e.g. CD4-FITC).
- ☐ The axis scales are clearly visible. Include numbers along axes only for bottom left plot of group (a 'group' is an analysis of identical markers).
- ☐ All plots are contour plots with outliers or pseudocolor plots.
- ☐ A numerical value for number of cells or percentage (with statistics) is provided.

Methodology

Sample preparation	<i>Describe the sample preparation, detailing the biological source of the cells and any tissue processing steps used.</i>
Instrument	<i>Identify the instrument used for data collection, specifying make and model number.</i>
Software	<i>Describe the software used to collect and analyze the flow cytometry data. For custom code that has been deposited into a community repository, provide accession details.</i>
Cell population abundance	<i>Describe the abundance of the relevant cell populations within post-sort fractions, providing details on the purity of the samples and how it was determined.</i>
Gating strategy	<i>Describe the gating strategy used for all relevant experiments, specifying the preliminary FSC/SSC gates of the starting cell population, indicating where boundaries between "positive" and "negative" staining cell populations are defined.</i>
☐ Tick this box to confirm that a figure exemplifying the gating strategy is provided in the Supplementary Information.	

Magnetic resonance imaging

Experimental design

Design type	<i>Indicate task or resting state; event-related or block design.</i>
Design specifications	<i>Specify the number of blocks, trials or experimental units per session and/or subject, and specify the length of each trial or block (if trials are blocked) and interval between trials.</i>
Behavioral performance measures	<i>State number and/or type of variables recorded (e.g. correct button press, response time) and what statistics were used to establish that the subjects were performing the task as expected (e.g. mean, range, and/or standard deviation across subjects).</i>

Acquisition

Imaging type(s)	<i>Specify: functional, structural, diffusion, perfusion.</i>
Field strength	<i>Specify in Tesla</i>
Sequence & imaging parameters	<i>Specify the pulse sequence type (gradient echo, spin echo, etc.), imaging type (EPI, spiral, etc.), field of view, matrix size, slice thickness, orientation and TE/TR/flip angle.</i>
Area of acquisition	<i>State whether a whole brain scan was used OR define the area of acquisition, describing how the region was determined.</i>
Diffusion MRI	☐ Used ☐ Not used

Preprocessing

Preprocessing software	<i>Provide detail on software version and revision number and on specific parameters (model/functions, brain extraction, segmentation, smoothing kernel size, etc.).</i>
Normalization	<i>If data were normalized/standardized, describe the approach(es): specify linear or non-linear and define image types used for transformation OR indicate that data were not normalized and explain rationale for lack of normalization.</i>
Normalization template	<i>Describe the template used for normalization/transformation, specifying subject space or group standardized space (e.g. original Talairach, MNI305, ICBM152) OR indicate that the data were not normalized.</i>
Noise and artifact removal	<i>Describe your procedure(s) for artifact and structured noise removal, specifying motion parameters, tissue signals and physiological signals (heart rate, respiration).</i>
Volume censoring	<i>Define your software and/or method and criteria for volume censoring, and state the extent of such censoring.</i>

Statistical modeling & inference

Model type and settings	<i>Specify type (mass univariate, multivariate, RSA, predictive, etc.) and describe essential details of the model at the first and second levels (e.g. fixed, random or mixed effects; drift or auto-correlation).</i>
Effect(s) tested	<i>Define precise effect in terms of the task or stimulus conditions instead of psychological concepts and indicate whether ANOVA or factorial designs were used.</i>
Specify type of analysis:	☐ Whole brain ☐ ROI-based ☐ Both
Statistic type for inference	<i>Specify voxel-wise or cluster-wise and report all relevant parameters for cluster-wise methods.</i>
(See Eklund et al. 2016)	
Correction	<i>Describe the type of correction and how it is obtained for multiple comparisons (e.g. FWE, FDR, permutation or Monte Carlo).</i>

Models & analysis

n/a	Involved in the study
☐	☐ Functional and/or effective connectivity
☐	☐ Graph analysis
☐	☐ Multivariate modeling or predictive analysis
Functional and/or effective connectivity	<i>Report the measures of dependence used and the model details (e.g. Pearson correlation, partial correlation, mutual information).</i>
Graph analysis	<i>Report the dependent variable and connectivity measure, specifying weighted graph or binarized graph, subject- or group-level, and the global and/or node summaries used (e.g. clustering coefficient, efficiency, etc.).</i>
Multivariate modeling and predictive analysis	<i>Specify independent variables, features extraction and dimension reduction, model, training and evaluation metrics.</i>