



[1]

Oreodont, 48 - 4 Ma

Merycoidodontidae
North America
0 miles away



Looks

Stocky body and pig-like in appearance, from jackrabbit to domestic pig in size
Species range from 2 kg to 310 kg
Teeth: Early Eocene forms had low-crowned molars as they tended to eat low-lying vegetation. Later species of Oreodont developed high-crowned teeth for greater dietary versatility.
They had large canines for self-defence, fending off predators at the mouths of their burrows.



[2]



Hobbies

Burrowing
Wide feet and toes that curved in suggested Oreodonts were burrowers. Oreodonts dug burrows into soft consolidated sediments, raised litters of offspring, occupied dens all year, and defended themselves from predators at the burrow entrances.



[3]

Location



Western Hemisphere
Oreodonts lived on the western hemisphere. Most fossils were found in N. America, Mexico and Canada. The highest number of fossils were dated from the late Eocene to early Oligocene.
Rivers
Oreodonts tend to be found near rivers where there were soft, yet firm and silty mudstones that were ideal for its favourite activity – burrowing. It made it ideal to raise its offspring too, due to the abundance of resources and shelter.

Oreodont fossils were most commonly found in the shaded regions of the map

MEET THE MERYCOIDODON

by Jean Ng, Osmond Chia, and Al Yin Spring 2019 GEOL204 Section 0101

10 matches



Browsers that evolved into grazers

Started off as browsers that consumed bushes lower crowned teeth for browsing and lived in the forest -- peaked in the late Eocene.



[4] Environmental conditions caused certain groups to develop a diet for grass and near-ground plants. They had higher crowned teeth that were specialized for tougher diets -- an adaptation for coping with excessive rates of dental wear associated with abrasive herbivorous diets. Higher crowned teeth last longer, resistant to the eroding effect of soils and roots.

[5]

Predators

Sabretooth cats, hyaenodon and and Archaeotherium were all predators hunting the commonly-found Oreodonts.



Oreodonts had few options of defence against predators, other than strength in numbers and prominent canines to scare and defend itself when it needed to.

[6]

Other means of self-defence include burrowing when predators are around.



Herds

Oreodonts travelled in big herds for strength in numbers against predators. They were the most common species, comprising 25% of fauna around the White River formation of N. America.

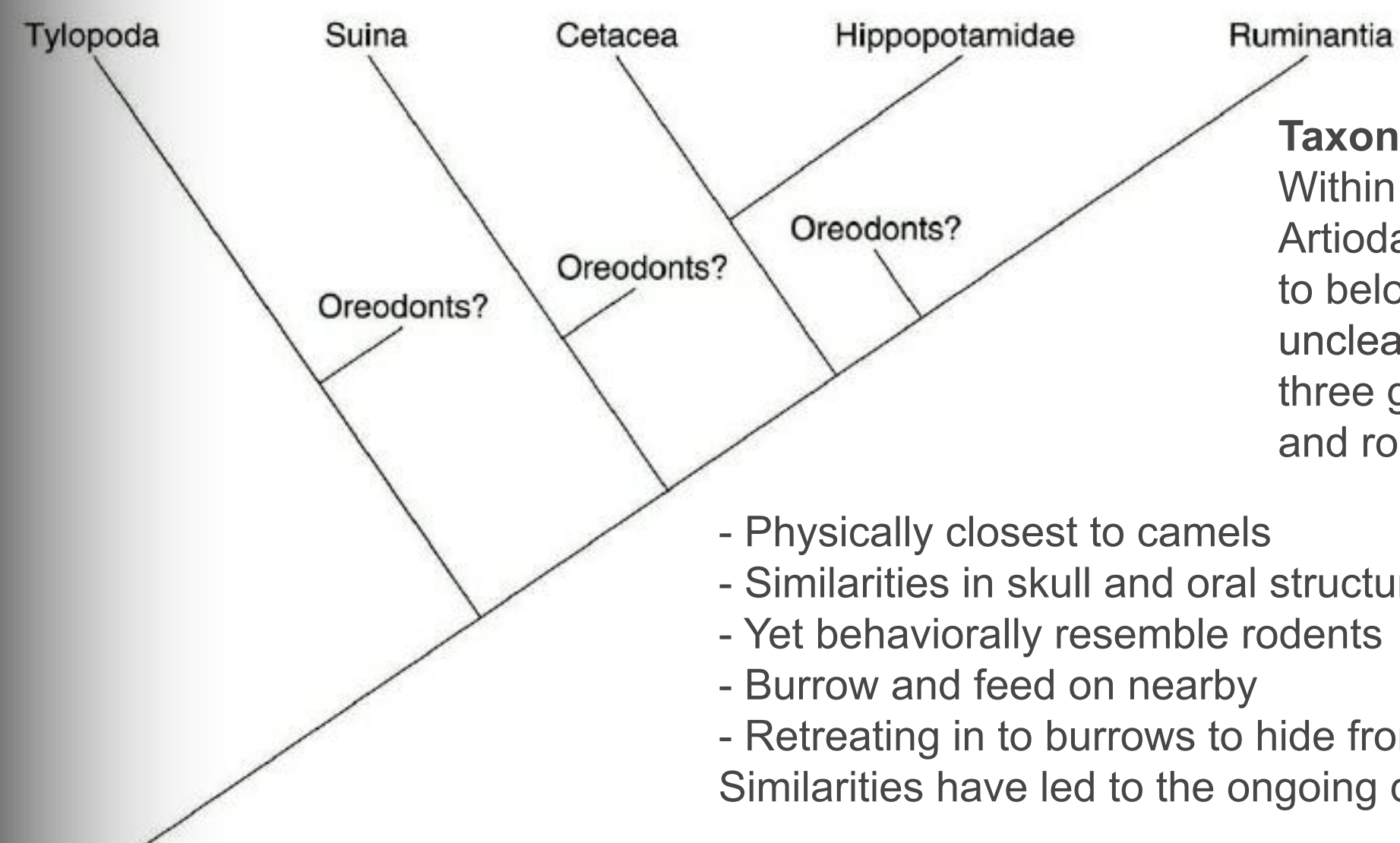
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Offspring

Oreodont fossils found in caves have shown evidences of litters of 3-5 cubs. The largest specimen contained 1 adult, 4 subadults, and five juveniles in a single large burrow, where they would raise their offspring and live together. In this particular burrow, predators had feasted on juveniles leaving leftover remains in the den, which collapsed and form the core of nodules we find them in today.



[7]



Taxonomy

Within the larger classification of Artiodactyla, Oreodonts are believed to belong to three positions. It is unclear because they exhibit traits of three groups: pigs/peccaries, deer and rodents, and camels and llamas.

- Physically closest to camels
 - Similarities in skull and oral structure.
 - Yet behaviorally resemble rodents
 - Burrow and feed on nearby
 - Retreating in to burrows to hide from predators.
- Similarities have led to the ongoing debate about tree position

Diet

Community