

New Barney-Like Organism Discovered

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In the 1995 inaugural issue of the *Annals of Improbable Research* (that's volume 1, number 1, for those who may be inaugurally challenged) Edward Theriot, Arthur Bogan, and Earle Spamer reported on the "[Taxonomy of Barney](#)". The [Barney](#) organism was supposed to be a dinosaur, one which had a profound affection for (and affection returned by) juvenile humans.

The researchers proved that the putative dinosaurian was not a dinosaur but a hitherto unknown member of the Hominidae, the same taxonomic family to which humans belong. Most notably, X-ray analysis showed the Barney skeleton as hominid in morphology, not reptilian. And further, the authors presented statistical evidence that Barney was taxonomically closer to dead salmon than even to the dinosaurs.

Further research by Theriot and Spamer, presented in a video on behalf of *AIR* to a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), showed the capture and dissection of a live Barney specimen, retrieved from Yellowstone National Park under the careful oversight (and the occasional disgusted comment) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department. Some of this research was also presented in a 10-minute overview on the Canadian Discovery Channel, with some incredulous looks from our host.



At this moment (October 2009), many Americans are seized by object fascination with the unpredictable movements of small white spheres; specifically. This is the combat known as the World Series of baseball, which this year pitches the New York Yankees against the defending world champions, the Philadelphia Phillies. As part of our research in this field of dreams, we here report the discovery of another bipedal vertebrate, similar to the Barney organism.

The Philadelphia Phillies and the team's fans affiliate with a bipedal, vertebrate, fuzzy, green organism they informally name the [Philly Phanatic](#). As like Barney, the organism receives great affection from humans, particularly from the juvenile forms. We have conducted hurried research, mostly by email, gathering the same kinds of evidence we

used in our work on Barney. To ensure that our methods were the same in both studies, we have chosen and discarded evidence until we achieved the results we believed, then stopped.

Despite the derived traits and apparently advanced use of clothing and tools, the new Philly organism shares other characteristics with the Barney organism, in particular the fat body habitus and green fuzzy epidermal covering. These we believe surely positions it in a monophyletic group with Barney in the salmonid clade.

The Philly and Barney organisms share other features as well. The new Philly taxon, like Barney, possesses a derived oral apparatus, with its teeth hidden beneath in the internal skeleton. Unlike Barney, the Philly organism has a highly modified projectile nasal-lingual extension, possibly used in self defense or in drinking from ethanolic extracts of plant material. Its animated motions are a kind of territorial display,

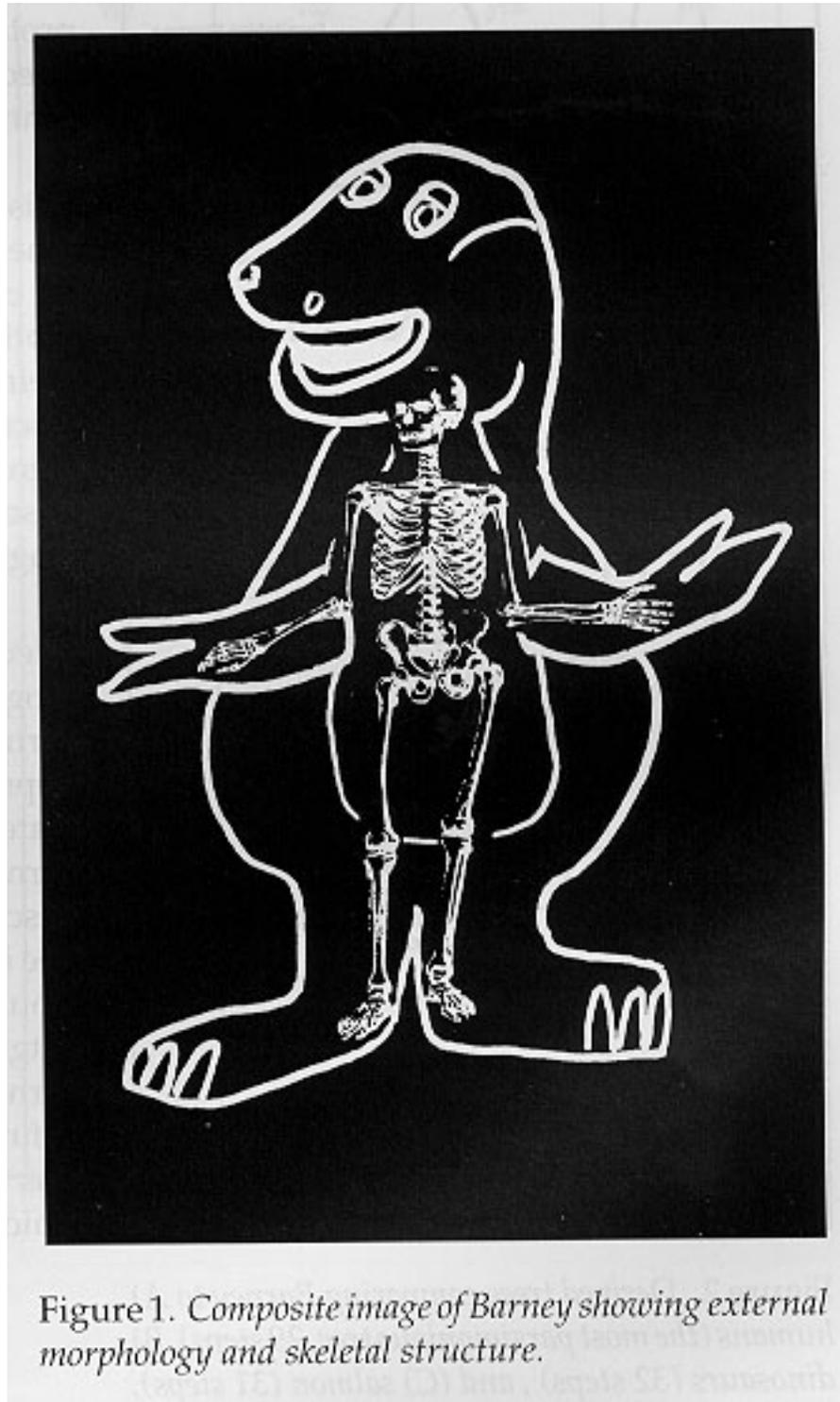


Figure 1. Composite image of Barney showing external morphology and skeletal structure.

often used in derogatory fashion in the presence of a visiting baseball team (which tends to be viewed as a competitive threat). The beast will sometimes engage in amusing prancing behavior, which one would expect to be some preliminary to mating behavior, however, we have thankfully not observed this. It appears to lack genitalia, for which we are also grateful, although this may account for its occasional frustrated behavior of chest bumping opposing team members and visiting mascots.

A noticeable difference between the Philly and Barney organisms is that while Barney vocalizes without any outward movement of its oral display (the mechanism remains a mystery). Observers (adults, mostly) are often made very uncomfortable by such displays. The Philly organism physically grasps humans, and it frequently projects an animated nasal-lingual extension, but is mute. Observers are not offended by the display.

We note that the general Barney phylogeny has created an organism that exhibits sickening cuteness and long, swaying motions while it sings mantras of moral reflection. On the other hand, see a different "philogenesis" for the Philly organism, which exhibits rapid physical movements, pop-eyed antics, and (if we didn't know any better) a sense of humor.

We have serious doubts, despite what we just said, that the Philly organism is, like Barney, akin to a dead salmon. Its taxonomic affinity is uncertain, which requires us to capture and sacrifice what may be the unique specimen. This is, however, for science. We expect the specimen to attempt an escape, which may delay reporting our objective results. But eventually, the organism's all-terrain vehicle (on which it has been observed to ride around the baseball field) will run out of gas.

We do not believe that the so-called "Philly Phanatic" organism is a faux Barney, which would force us into the very uncomfortable position of having to say it is a "phaux" dinosaur. There is a limit to the amount of alliterative cuteness even we can tolerate.

We have not made a comparison with the New York Yankees, as there seems to be no affiliate organism for that baseball team. And even if they did have one, we couldn't be bothered.

Once last year, Phanatic was spotted on the busiest thoroughfare in Philadelphia, possibly associated with the largest assembly of hominids (many inebriated) in city history. We are confident that the creature will make a similar appearance next week, amidst a similarly large gathering of amiable bipeds.

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Author contributions:

E.S. wrote the article.

R.M. noted the similarities between the Phanatic and Barney.

E.T. spel checked.