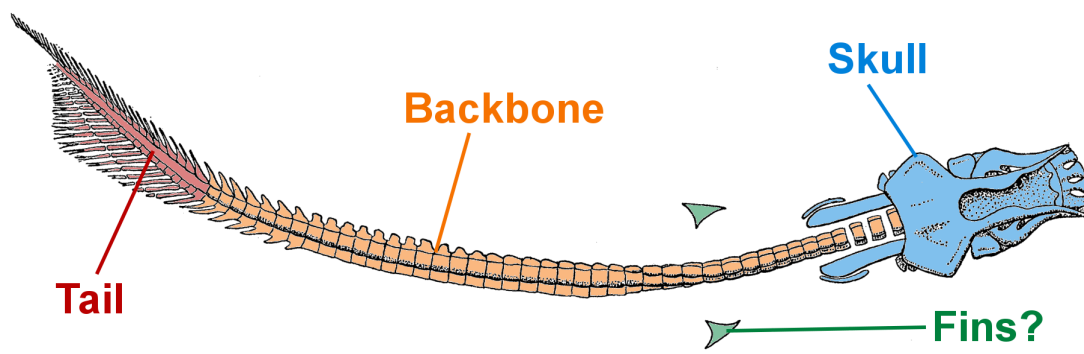


Palaeospondylus

Pay-lee-oh-spon-die-lus

Palaeospondylus is a very small fish (1-2cm) from the Devonian (420 to 360 million years ago) of Scotland, which is mainly found in only one place: **Achnarras Quarry** in Caithness. Despite the fact that we have hundreds of specimens and that it's been known to science for over 100 years *Palaeospondylus* is a bit of a **mystery to scientists**, with no-one quite sure what it is. Ideas for what it is have included almost all of the living families of fish, a small placoderm, a jawless hagfish, or an amphibian tadpole. Recently the most popular suggestion has been that it is a **lungfish larva**, but this is still far from settled.



Fossil facts

- You can see very clearly in the fossil that *Palaeospondylus* has a backbone. This tells us that it is definitely a vertebrate (an animal with a backbone), like fishes and us.
- Part of the reason why the mystery of *Palaeospondylus* has been so difficult to solve is that the bones in its head look nothing like any other Devonian fish.