

Experts say a relative of the kangaroo hopped long ago.



Kear studied the fossil of a foot!

You probably know that kangaroos hop. A new report says a kangaroo ancestor from millions of years ago could hop, too!

The research came out on Wednesday. It was on a [fossil](#) of an animal called a balbarid. It was about the size of a medium-sized dog. That's smaller than kangaroos. Balbarids spent a lot of time in trees.

Benjamin Kear found a 20-million-year-old balbarid [fossil](#) in 1998. "I was actually a student at the time," he told *News-O-Matic*. The remains included most of the balbarid's feet. His team compared that animal to the kangaroos of today. Kangaroos have long feet. After studying the balbarid's feet, scientists agreed that those body parts allowed the ancient animal to leap too!

When balbarids were alive, Australia was wetter. It was full of forests. That changed 10-15 million years ago. Australia's [climate](#) dried out. Today, there are lots of grasslands. This caused balbarids to go extinct. The animals died as their forest homes shrank.

Scientists had thought kangaroos started hopping when grasslands took over Australia. The land was flat. Jumping made it easier for the animals to get food. But the balbarid shows that creatures were hopping before.

"[Climate](#) change did not drive the kangaroo hop," Kear explained. The scientist said hopping is an "[efficient](#)" way to get around with a kangaroo's body. And kangaroos sure are good at leaping. The red kangaroo can hop at 20 miles per hour (32 kph). That's faster than most humans!

Kangaroo relatives were leaping long before Australia dried out. Scientists will try to find out more!

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