

# Genomic data suggest parallel dental vestigialization within the xenarthran radiation

Christopher A. Emerling<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Gillian C. Gibb<sup>1,4</sup>, Marie-Ka Tilak<sup>1</sup>, Jonathan J. Hughes<sup>5</sup>, Melanie Kuch<sup>5</sup>, Ana T. Duggan<sup>5</sup>, Hendrik N. Poinar<sup>5</sup>, Michael W. Nachman<sup>2</sup>, and Frédéric Delsuc<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institut des Sciences de l'Evolution de Montpellier (ISEM), Univ. Montpellier, CNRS, IRD – Montpellier, France

<sup>2</sup> Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and Department of Integrative Biology, University of California – Berkeley, CA, USA

<sup>3</sup> Biology Department, Reedley College – Reedley, CA, USA

<sup>4</sup> School of Natural Sciences, Massey University – Palmerston North, New Zealand

<sup>5</sup> McMaster Ancient DNA Centre, [Department of Anthropology](#), McMaster University – Hamilton, ON, Canada

Correspondence: [christopher.emerling@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:christopher.emerling@reedleycollege.edu), [Frederic.Delsuc@umontpellier.fr](mailto:Frederic.Delsuc@umontpellier.fr)

## ABSTRACT

The recent influx of genomic data has provided greater insights into the molecular basis for regressive evolution, or vestigialization, through gene loss and pseudogenization. As such, the analysis of gene degradation patterns has the potential to provide insights into the evolutionary history of regressed anatomical traits. We specifically applied these principles to the xenarthran radiation (anteaters, sloths, armadillos), which is characterized by taxa with a gradation in regressed dental phenotypes. Whether the pattern among extant xenarthrans is due to an ancient and gradual decay of dental morphology or occurred repeatedly in parallel is unknown. We tested these competing hypotheses by examining 11 core dental genes in most living species of Xenarthra, characterizing shared inactivating mutations and patterns of relaxed selection during their radiation. Here we report evidence of independent and distinct events of dental gene loss in the major xenarthran subclades. First, we found strong evidence of complete enamel loss in the common ancestor of sloths and anteaters, suggested by the inactivation of five enamel-associated genes (*AMELX*, *AMTN*, *MMP20*, *ENAM*, *ACP4*). Next, whereas dental regression appears to have halted in sloths, presumably a critical event that ultimately permitted adaptation to an herbivorous lifestyle, anteaters continued losing genes on the path towards complete tooth loss. Echoes of this event are recorded in the genomes of all living anteaters, being marked by a 2-bp deletion in a gene critical for dentinogenesis (*DSPP*) and a putative shared 1-bp insertion in a gene linked to tooth retention (*ODAPH*). By contrast, in the two major armadillo clades, genes pertaining to the dento-gingival junction and amelogenesis appear to have been independently inactivated prior to losing all or some enamel. These genomic data provide evidence for multiple pathways and rates of anatomical regression, and underscore the utility of using pseudogenes to reconstruct evolutionary history when fossils are sparse.

**Keywords:** Armadillos, Anteaters, Sloths, Dental regression, Gene loss, Molecular evolution, Phylogenetics

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54 Regressive evolution involves the vestigialization or loss of formerly adaptive traits over time, with  
 55 examples ranging from the reduction of wings in flightless birds, the degeneration of limbs in various  
 56 squamates and aquatic mammals, and the degradation of eyes in species occupying extreme dim-light  
 57 niches. The reduction of such traits is often thought to result from a lack of adaptive utility after entering a  
 58 novel niche, resulting in relaxed selection and regression through drift, and/or direct selection against the  
 59 trait to minimize energetic costs (Fong et al., 1995; Jeffery, 2009; Lahti et al., 2009). The increasing  
 60 availability of genomic data has permitted the documentation of parallel, and possibly causal, mutational  
 61 events in genes associated with these and other vestigial phenotypes, providing a greater understanding of  
 62 the genetic basis of regressive evolution (Albalat and Cañestro, 2016; Burga et al., 2017; Emerling, 2017;  
 63 Emerling and Springer, 2014; Leal and Cohn, 2016; Sharma et al., 2018).

64 For instance, while the teeth of gnathostomes can be considered a key adaptive trait in the origin of and  
 65 radiation of this clade, dentition has subsequently regressed in numerous lineages (Charles et al., 2013;  
 66 Davit-Béal et al., 2009), such as baleen whales, turtles, birds and pangolins. Notably, there are well-  
 67 documented corresponding genomic signals behind these numerous instances of dental degeneration.  
 68 Genetic association studies in humans with dental diseases and mouse knockout models have led to a robust  
 69 understanding of the genetics underlying tooth development (Meredith et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2017), and  
 70 comparative genomic analyses of edentulous (toothless) and enamelless vertebrates have revealed that  
 71 many of these same dental genes were deleted or have eroded into unitary pseudogenes. Indeed, the list of  
 72 documented dental pseudogenes in such vertebrates includes those encoding (1) enamel matrix proteins  
 73 (EMPs), which provide a protein scaffold for the seeding of hydroxyapatite crystals during enamel  
 74 development (ENAM [enamelin], AMELX [amelogenin], AMBN [ameloblastin]) (Choo et al., 2016; Delsuc et  
 75 al., 2015; Meredith et al., 2014, 2013, 2009; Sire et al., 2008), (2) a metalloproteinase that processes these  
 76 matrix proteins into their mature forms (MMP20 [enamelysin]) (Meredith et al., 2011a, 2014), (3) other  
 77 proteins expressed in both enamel-forming ameloblasts and enamel-contacting gingiva (AMTN [amelotin],  
 78 ODAM [odontogenic ameloblast-associated]) (Gasse et al., 2012; Meredith et al., 2014; Springer et al., 2019),  
 79 (4) proteins of unknown function but showing clear associations with enamel formation (ACP4 [acid  
 80 phosphatase 4; formerly called ACPT], ODAHP [odontogenesis-associated phosphoprotein; formerly called  
 81 C4orf26]) (Mu et al. 2021; Sharma et al., 2018; Springer et al., 2016), and (5) a protein that contributes to the  
 82 dentin matrix (DSPP [dentin sialophosphoprotein]) (Meredith et al., 2014; Sire et al., 2008; McKnight and  
 83 Fisher 2009).

84 Given the parallel signals between genes and anatomy during the evolution of degenerated traits,  
 85 genomic data have the potential to provide insights into the sequence, dynamics and consequences of  
 86 regressive evolution, particularly in cases where the fossil record is limited. Xenarthra, which includes  
 87 armadillos (Cingulata), sloths (Folivora) and anteaters (Vermilingua), represents a compelling example of the  
 88 process of regressive evolution in regards to dentition. In contrast to the completely edentulous clades of  
 89 baleen whales, birds, turtles and pangolins, xenarthrans span a spectrum of regressed dental phenotypes  
 90 across a continual 68 million year radiation (Charles et al., 2013; Ciancio et al., 2014; Davit-Béal et al., 2009;  
 91 Gibb et al., 2016; Vizcaíno, 2009). For instance, anteaters are united with sloths in the clade Pilosa, but while  
 92 anteaters entirely lack teeth, sloths have intermediately-regressed teeth, possessing an edentulous  
 93 premaxilla and simple, peg-like, single-rooted, enamelless dentition. Indeed, their teeth have deviated so far  
 94 from the ancestral tribosphenic form, that only recent developmental research has provided evidence of  
 95 dental homologies to other placental mammals (Hautier et al., 2016). Sister to Pilosa are the Cingulata, which  
 96 are divided into the extant families Dasypodidae and Chlamyphoridae. Most extant armadillos have an  
 97 edentulous premaxilla, as well as peg-like, single-rooted teeth, which lack enamel in adult animals (Ferigolo,  
 98 1985). A notable exception is Dasypodidae, which possess vestigial enamel on deciduous teeth and prismatic  
 99 or prismless enamel on permanent teeth of juveniles, which wears away with use (Ciancio et al., 2021;  
 100 Martin, 1916; Spurgin, 1904).

101 The spectrum of degenerated dental phenotypes across Xenarthra raises a number of distinct questions.  
 102 The first set concerns the specific history of the xenarthran clade. Anteaters are myrmecophagous mammals,  
 103 almost exclusively consuming copious amounts of ants and termites by employing an extensive tongue with  
 104 sticky saliva, and as such have little use for teeth. Sloths, by contrast, are herbivorous and often folivorous,  
 105 and need to chew fibrous material with their seemingly ill-equipped, enamelless teeth. Among armadillos,

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110 some are relatively myrmecophagous (e.g., tolypeutines), while others are more omnivorous (e.g.,  
111 euphractines). Whereas an extended history of myrmecophagy is universally associated with dental  
112 regression (Charles et al., 2013; Davit-Béal et al., 2009; Reiss, 2001), herbivory and omnivory are not.  
113 Accordingly, is the dental regression seen in xenarthrans the result of inheriting regressed teeth from their  
114 last common ancestor, which possibly had an insectivorous/myrmecophagous diet followed by subsequent  
115 dietary shifts to herbivory and omnivory? Or does it represent parallel events in multiple lineages?

116 A second set of questions concerns the timing and patterns of regressive evolution. First, has the  
117 degeneration of teeth in xenarthrans taken place over a short period of time, consistent with selection  
118 against their presence, or has it been a gradual process over many millions of years in a manner more in line  
119 with relaxed selection and genetic drift? Furthermore, is there any sort of consistency in the sets of genes  
120 that are lost and the timing of those losses, or does the regression of teeth occur via divergent genomic  
121 patterns?

122 To answer these evolutionary questions, we collected genomic data to study patterns of  
123 pseudogenization and selection pressure in 11 core dental genes for most living species of Xenarthra. Our  
124 results point to xenarthran teeth having repeatedly regressed in parallel, showing distinct patterns of gene  
125 loss in different lineages in order to give rise to the variation in dentition observed across the clade today.  
126 They further suggest that regressive evolution can take place both gradually, and in relatively rapid, discrete  
127 phases for the same trait during the radiation of a single clade.

128

## Methods

129 To study patterns of dental gene loss in xenarthrans, we assembled a dataset of 11 dental genes: nine  
130 genes have well-characterized functions and/or expression patterns tied to tooth development and are  
131 frequently pseudogenized in edentulous and enamelless taxa ([ACP4](#), [AMBN](#), [AMELX](#), [AMTN](#), [DSPP](#), [ENAM](#),  
132 [MMP20](#), [ODAM](#), [ODAPH](#); Choo et al., 2016; Delsuc et al., 2015; Gasse et al., 2012; McKnight and Fisher, 2009;  
133 Meredith et al., 2014, 2013, 2011a, 2009; Mu et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2018; Sire et al., 2008; Smith et al.,  
134 2017; Springer et al., 2019, 2016), and two other genes ([DMP1](#), [MEPE](#)) are expressed in dentin (Sun et al.,  
135 2011; Gullard et al., 2016). Our taxonomic coverage included 31 xenarthran species (four anteaters, six  
136 sloths, seven dasypodid armadillos, 14 chlamyphorid armadillos) plus 25 outgroup species spanning the  
137 remaining three superorders of placental mammals. We used a combination of strategies to reconstruct  
138 gene sequences: targeted sequencing of PCR amplified regions, exon-capture, whole-genome sequencing,  
139 and retrieval of sequences from publicly available genome assemblies (Supplementary Tables S1, S2, [Figure](#)  
140 [S1](#)).

141

### Biological samples

142 Xenarthran tissue samples used for DNA extractions and amplifications of dental gene exons came from  
143 the Animal Tissue Collection of the Institut des Sciences de Montpellier ([Supplementary Table S1](#)): nine-  
144 banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus* ISEM T-JL556), greater long-nosed armadillo (*Dasypus kappleri*  
145 ISEM T-2977), southern naked-tailed armadillo (*Cabassous unicinctus* ISEM T-2291), large hairy armadillo  
146 (*Chaetophractus villosus* ISEM NP390), giant armadillo (*Priodontes maximus* ISEM T-2353), southern three-  
147 banded armadillo (*Tolypeutes matacus* ISEM T-2348), pichi (*Zaedyus pichiy* ISEM T-6060), pink fairy armadillo  
148 (*Chlamyphorus truncatus* ISEM T-CT1), pale-throated three-fingered sloth (*Bradypus tridactylus* ISEM T-  
149 1476), [Linnaeus's](#) two-fingered sloth (*Choloepus didactylus* ISEM T-1722), Hoffmann's two-fingered sloth  
150 (*Choloepus hoffmanni* ISEM T-6052), southern tamandua (*Tamandua tetradactyla* ISEM T-6054), giant  
151 anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla* ISEM T-2862), and pygmy anteater (*Cyclopes didactylus* ISEM T-1631),  
152 [and from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology \(Berkeley, CA, USA\) for the brown-throated three-fingered](#)  
153 [sloth \(\*Bradypus variegatus\* MVZ 155186\)](#). Xenarthran specimens and corresponding Illumina genomic  
154 libraries used in exon capture experiments were those previously generated in Gibb et al. (2016). The greater  
155 fairy armadillo museum sample (*Calyptophractus retusus* ZSM T-Bret) and the pink fairy armadillo  
156 (*Chlamyphorus truncatus* ISEM T-CT1) used for whole genome shotgun sequencing were respectively  
157 obtained from the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology (Munich, Germany) and provided by Dr. Mariella  
158 Superina as previously detailed in Delsuc et al. (2012). The pygmy anteater (*Cyclopes didactylus* JAG M2300),  
159 [the pale-throated three-fingered sloth \(\*Bradypus tridactylus\* JAG M1664\)](#), [the giant armadillo \(\*Priodontes\*](#)  
160 [maximus M844\)](#), [and the greater long-nosed armadillo \(\*Dasypus kappleri\* M3462\)](#) used for whole genome  
161

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patterns of inactivation

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sloth (*Bradypus variegatus* ISEM T-2999),  
southern

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174 shotgun sequencing came from the JAGUARS animal tissue collection hosted at the Institut Pasteur de la  
175 Guyane (Cayenne, French Guiana). [The six-banded armadillo \(\*Euphractus sexcinctus\* T-ESE1\) used for whole](#)  
176 [genome shotgun sequencing was sampled at the Zoo de Lunaret \(Montpellier, France\)](#). Finally, the southern  
177 naked-tailed armadillo (Cabassous unicinctus MVZ 155190) sample used for whole genome assembly was  
178 derived from a frozen tissue sample from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (Berkeley, CA, USA). [In](#)  
179 [accordance with the policy of sharing benefits and advantages \(APA; TREL1916196S/224\), biological material](#)  
180 [from French Guiana collected after October 2014 has been registered in the JAGUARS collection supported](#)  
181 [by Kwata NGO, Institut Pasteur de la Guyane, DEAL Guyane, and Collectivité Territoriale de la Guyane.](#)  
182 [Biological samples from the JAGUARS collection were exchanged through formal material transfer](#)  
183 [agreements granted by DEAL Guyane.](#)

#### 184 185 **DNA extractions, PCR amplifications, and Sanger sequencing**

186 Total genomic DNA was extracted from tissue samples (Supplementary Table S1) preserved in 95%  
187 ethanol using the QIAampDNA extraction kit (Qiagen). Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was used to target  
188 and amplify AMBN, AMELX, DMP1, DSPP, ENAM, and MEPE exons. To do so, a number of [primer](#) pairs were  
189 designed from alignments of available sequences (Supplementary Table S3). PCR conditions were as follows:  
190 95°C for 5 min, followed by 40 cycles at 95°C for 30 s, 50-55°C for 30 s, 72°C for 45 s, and a final extension  
191 step at 72°C for 10 min. All PCR products were then purified from 1% agarose gels using Amicon Ultrafree-DA  
192 columns (Millipore Corporation, Bedford, MA, USA) and sequenced on both strands using the polymerase  
193 chain reaction primers with the Big Dye Terminator cycle sequencing kit on an Applied ABI Prism 3130XL  
194 automated sequencer. Electropherograms were checked by eye and assembled into contigs using Geneious  
195 Prime (Kearse et al., 2012).

#### 196 197 **Target sequence capture and sequencing**

198 Baits for DNA sequence exon capture were designed using available xenarthran sequences for the  
199 complete CDSs of all focal dental genes except [ACP4. This was due to its link to amelogenesis imperfecta](#)  
200 [being reported after the design and synthesis of these baits](#). For each gene, 80mer baits were generated with  
201 a 4x tiling density and were then BLASTed against the genome assemblies of *Choloepus hoffmanni*  
202 (GCA\_000164785.2) and *Dasypus novemcinctus* (GCA\_000208655.2). Baits with more than one hit and a Tm  
203 outside the range 35-40°C were excluded. This resulted in a final set of [5,262](#) baits (Supplementary Dataset  
204 S1) that were [synthesized](#) as part of a myBaits RNA kit by Arbor Biosciences (Ann Arbor, MI, USA). The  
205 xenarthran Illumina libraries previously prepared (Gibb et al., 2016) were subsequently enriched with the  
206 designed bait set in order to capture target sequences following previously described methodological  
207 procedures (Delsuc et al., 2018). All enriched libraries were pooled together at varying concentrations with  
208 the aim of producing one million reads for sequencing. Sequencing of the enrichment set was performed at  
209 McMaster Genomics Facility (McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada) on an Illumina MiSeq instrument  
210 using 150 bp paired-end reads.

211 Index and adapter sequences were removed from raw reads and overlapping pairs merged with leeHom  
212 (Renaud et al., 2014), and then mapped to all xenarthran reference sequences available with a modified  
213 version of BWA (Li and Durbin, 2009; Stenzel, 2017). Mapped reads were additionally filtered to those that  
214 were either merged or properly paired, had unique 5' and 3' mapping coordinates, and then restricted to  
215 reads of at least 24 bp with SAMtools (Li et al., 2009). The bam files were then imported into Geneious to  
216 select the best assembly for each sequence depending on the most successful reference sequence. All  
217 sequences have been deposited in GenBank at the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI)  
218 under accession numbers OP966064 to OP966335.

#### 219 220 **Whole genome shotgun libraries construction and sequencing**

221 For the greater fairy armadillo museum specimen (*Calyptophractus retusus* ZMS T-Bret), we constructed  
222 new whole genome DNA Illumina libraries using a previously extracted genomic DNA and library preparation  
223 procedure (Gibb et al., 2016). These degraded DNA libraries were sequenced at the Vincent J. Coates  
224 Genomics Sequencing Laboratory (University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA) on an Illumina HiSeq4000  
225 instrument using 50 bp single reads. Whole genome DNA Illumina library preparation and sequencing of  
226 [Bradypus tridactylus \(JAG M1664\)](#), [Cyclopes didactylus \(JAG M2300\)](#), [Chlamyphorus truncatus \(ISEM T-CT1\)](#),  
227 [Euphractus sexcinctus \(ISEM T-ESE1\)](#), [Dasypus kappleri \(JAG M3462\)](#), and [Priodontes maximus \(JAG M844\)](#)

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235 were outsourced to Novogene Europe (Cambridge UK). These libraries were sequenced on an Illumina  
236 NovaSeq instrument using 150 bp paired-end reads. The resulting short reads were cleaned from sequencing  
237 indexes and adaptors and quality filtered using Trimmomatic (Bolger et al., 2014) with default parameters.  
238 These were then mapped to their closest available relative xenarthran reference sequence using the  
239 Geneious mapping algorithm with default settings. Consensus sequences of mapped reads were called using  
240 the 50% majority rule for each targeted gene.

#### 242 Whole genome sequencing and assemblies

243 For the southern naked-tailed armadillo (*Cabassous unicinctus* MVZ 155190), a PCR-free library Illumina  
244 library with 450 bp inserts was prepared according to the recommendations of the Broad Institute for  
245 subsequent genome assembly with DISCOVAR de novo  
246 ([https://software.broadinstitute.org/software/discovar/blog/?page\\_id=375](https://software.broadinstitute.org/software/discovar/blog/?page_id=375)) following the strategy of the  
247 Zoonomia project (Zoonomia consortium, 2020). The library was sequenced at the Vincent J. Coates  
248 Genomics Sequencing Laboratory (University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA) on an Illumina HiSeq4000  
249 instrument using 250 bp paired-end reads. A draft genome assembly was produced from these data using  
250 the DISCOVAR de novo assembler  
251 ([https://github.com/broadinstitute/discovar\\_de\\_novo/releases/tag/v52488](https://github.com/broadinstitute/discovar_de_novo/releases/tag/v52488)) using the following command:  
252 DiscovarDeNovo READS=[ReadsFile] OUT\_DIR=[OutputDirectory] NUM\_THREADS=24 MAX\_MEM\_GB=700.

253 We also utilized multiple whole genome assemblies deposited in [NCBI Whole Genome Shotgun \(WGS\)](#)  
254 contig database (Supplementary Table S2). To obtain genes on NCBI, we BLASTed human reference  
255 nucleotide sequences, composed of exons, introns and flanking [sequences](#), against the WGS database using  
256 discontinuous megablast ([BLAST+ 2.8.0](#)). We then used the NCBI-derived xenarthran sequences to BLAST  
257 using discontinuous megablast against Discovar de novo assemblies imported into Geneious. Sequences  
258 derived from assemblies that contained strings of more than 10 unknown nucleotides (Ns) had these  
259 stretches of Ns reduced to 10 for ease of alignment. Raw sequencing reads have been deposited in the Short  
260 Read Archive (SRA) at the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) under Bioproject  
261 PRJNA907496. The Discovar de novo draft genome assembly for the southern naked-tailed armadillo [is](#)  
262 [available on NCBI \(JAJQZBX000000000\)](#).

#### 264 Dataset assembly

265 Xenarthran sequences were assembled, and occasionally combined, from the various methodologies  
266 employed (Supplementary [Datasets S2–12](#)). Outgroup sequences were retrieved by BLASTing reference  
267 sequences against GenBank using discontinuous megablast and obtaining [NCBI](#) annotated gene models  
268 (Supplementary Table S2). All orthologs of xenarthrans and outgroup sequences were aligned using MUSCLE  
269 (Edgar, 2004) in Geneious, examined by eye and adjusted manually to correct for errors in the automated  
270 alignments. After characterizing putative inactivating mutations (see below), we prepared codon alignments  
271 suitable for subsequent selection pressure analyses based on dN/dS estimations (Supplementary [Datasets](#)  
272 [S13–23](#)) by removing insertions, incomplete codons and [stop codons](#) from individual sequences, and any  
273 other portions of sequences with dubious homology, including: exons 7–9 of AMBN, given probable exon  
274 duplications within the human reference (Toyosawa et al., 2000); [DSPP](#) highly repetitive region at the 3' end  
275 of exon 4 (McKnight and Fisher 2009; Fisher, 2011); and exon 2 of ODAPH in humans, which is a splice variant  
276 that is not common to all placental mammals (Springer et al., 2016). The evolutionary history of each gene  
277 was estimated by maximum likelihood phylogenetic reconstruction using RAXML v8.2.11 (Stamatakis, 2014)  
278 within Geneious (GTR+GAMMA model, Rapid hill-climbing) to detect aberrant sequences (e.g., possible  
279 contaminants and annotation errors stemming from poor gene models).

#### 281 Inactivating mutations and dN/dS ratio analyses

282 We classified dental genes [in five functional categories: \(1\) enamel matrix \(AMELX, AMBN, ENAM\), \(2\)](#)  
283 [enamel matrix-processing \(MMP20\), \(3\) dento-gingival junction \(AMTN, ODAM\), \(4\) unknown enamel](#)  
284 [function \(ACP4, ODAPH\) and \(5\) dentinogenesis \(DSPP, DMP1, MEPE\)](#). We searched for putative inactivating  
285 mutations, including frameshift insertions or deletions, premature stop codons, start codon mutations, and  
286 splice site mutations, and noted any mutations shared by multiple species within a clade. [We also noted](#)  
287 [examples in which exons were not recovered, some of which may correspond to whole exon deletions,](#)  
288 [although validation would require more contiguous genome assemblies.](#) We then performed several

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Supprimé: as (1) enamel-associated (AMELX, AMBN, AMTN, ENAM, MMP20, ACPT, ODAM) based on their clear impact on enamel formation (Meredith et al. 2014; Smith et al., 2017), (2) dentin-associated (DSPP) due a clear role in dentinogenesis (Sreenath et al., 2003), (3) tooth-associated (ODAPH) given an apparent critical link to both enamel and dentin-formation (Parry et al., 2012; Springer et al., 2016; Prasad et al., 2016), and (4) mineralization-associated (DMP1, MEPE) based on their expression in various mineralized tissues, including teeth (Sun et al., 2011; Gullard et al., 2016).

314 analyses to estimate the pattern and timing of shifts in selection pressure in tooth genes among our focal  
315 xenarthran taxa.

316 We first reconstructed the evolution of the dN/dS ratio ( $\omega$ ) for each gene using the Bayesian approach  
317 implemented in Coevol 1.4b (Lartillot and Poujol, 2011). Coevol provides a visual representation of the  
318 variation in dN/dS ratio estimates across a phylogeny (e.g. Lartillot and Delsuc, 2012; Springer et al., 2019).  
319 We used the *dsom* procedure to jointly estimate branch specific dN/dS ratios, divergence times, body sizes,  
320 generation times, and ages at sexual maturity modeled as a multivariate Brownian diffusion process across  
321 the phylogeny. We used the same composite placental mammal topology for all analyses (Emerling et al.,  
322 2015; Gibb et al., 2016), assumed fossil calibrations from previous studies (Meredith et al., 2011b; Emerling  
323 et al., 2015; Foley et al., 2016), and extracted the three life history traits (body size, generation time, and age  
324 at sexual maturity) from the PanTHERIA database (Jones et al., 2009). We set the prior on the root node to  
325 97 Ma with a standard deviation of 20 Ma following the molecular dating estimates of Meredith et al.  
326 (2011b). For each dataset, we ran two independent MCMC for a total of 1000 cycles, sampling parameters  
327 every cycle. MCMC convergence was checked by monitoring the effective sample size of the different  
328 parameters using the *tracecomp* command of Coevol. The first 100 points of each MCMC were excluded as  
329 burnin and posterior inferences were made from the remaining 900 sampled points of each chain.

330 Next, based on the patterns of inactivating mutations, we performed branch model dN/dS ratio analyses  
331 (Yang 1998; Yang and Nielsen, 1998) using codeml in PAML v4.8 (Yang, 2007) to estimate the selection  
332 pressure experienced by the different tooth genes throughout xenarthran history. We used the same  
333 topology as for Coevol estimations in all analyses and employed the following protocol for each gene, which  
334 is summarized graphically in Supplementary Figure S2. First, we ran codeml with a one-ratio model,  
335 successively employing codon frequency models 0, 1 and 2, then using the Akaike information criterion to  
336 determine the best-fitting model (Supplementary Table S4). Next, using the branch model approach, we  
337 allowed  $\omega$  to vary across the phylogeny in a multi-ratio model with branch labels set for (a) each set of  
338 branches within a clade that post-date the minimum gene inactivation date inferred from shared inactivation  
339 mutations, (b) each branch that coincides with inferred gene inactivation, and (c) certain branches that  
340 predate gene inactivation, often grouped together with multiple such branches. Note that this does not  
341 correspond to a free ratio model, but rather follows a previously described approach (Meredith et al., 2009).  
342 In every case, when taxon representation was sufficient, we set separate branch categories for stem  
343 Xenarthra, stem Pilosa, stem Cingulata, stem Chlamyphoridae, and stem Dasypodidae. All non-xenarthran  
344 branches were grouped together in a single  $\omega$  category. Given that all selected outgroup taxa have teeth with  
345 enamel, this background dN/dS ratio was assumed to be the average baseline (background)  $\omega$  estimate for  
346 functional dental genes. Finally, subsequent models were run in which focal xenarthran branches were fixed  
347 as part of this background ratio and then 1, respectively, to test if they diverged significantly from these  
348 contrasting assumptions of purifying selection (background) versus relaxed selection ( $\omega = 1$ ). As an example,  
349 the stem xenarthran branch was freely estimated in the initial multi-ratio model, then a second model fixed  
350 the stem xenarthran branch as part of the background ratio, and then a third model fixed the stem  
351 xenarthran branch at 1. This was carried out for all non-background branches. Models were then compared  
352 statistically using likelihood-ratio tests (Yang, 2007).

## 353 Results

### 354 Widespread pseudogenisation of dental genes in xenarthrans

355 Nine out of the 11 examined tooth genes are inactivated in most xenarthrans, though there are different  
356 patterns distinct to certain clades (Figure 1; Supplementary Tables S5-S15). The toothless anteaters have the  
357 greatest proportion of pseudogenized genes (82%), followed by the enamelless sloths (55%-64%) and  
358 chlamyphorid armadillos (45-55%), and the weakly-enamelled dasypodid armadillos (27-45%).

359 Genes encoding the enamel matrix proteins (EMPs) are commonly inactivated. Among all pilosans  
360 (anteaters and sloths), *AMBN*, *AMELX* and *ENAM* are pseudogenes (Figure 2). Among chlamyphorids, *ENAM*  
361 and *AMELX* are inactivated in all species, whereas *AMBN* varies, appearing intact in some euphractines. The  
362 sequences for the latter remain incomplete, however, raising the possibility of undetected inactivating  
363 mutations. Within dasypodids, EMPs are largely intact: *ENAM* is variable in its inactivation, *AMELX* is never a  
364 pseudogene and *AMBN* inactivation is only suggested by a start codon mutation in the nine-banded  
365 armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*).

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Supprimé: composite placental mammal

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Supprimé: (Emerling et al., 2015; Gibb et al., 2016),

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Supprimé: for each gene using the Bayesian approach implemented in Coevol 1.4b (Lartillot and Poujol, 2011). Coevol provides a visual representation of the variation in dN/dS ratio estimates across a phylogeny (e.g. Lartillot and Delsuc, 2012; Springer et al., 2019). We used the *dsom* procedure to jointly estimate branch specific dN/dS ratios, divergence times, body sizes, generation times, and ages at sexual maturity modeled as a multivariate Brownian diffusion process across the phylogeny. We used the same topology than in the *codeml* analyses, assumed fossil calibrations from previous studies (Meredith et al., 2011b; Emerling et al., 2015; Foley et al., 2016), and extracted the three life history traits (body size, generation time, and age at sexual maturity) from the PanTHERIA database (Jones et al., 2009). We set the prior on the root node to 97 Ma with a stand ... [1]

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Mis en forme ... [2]

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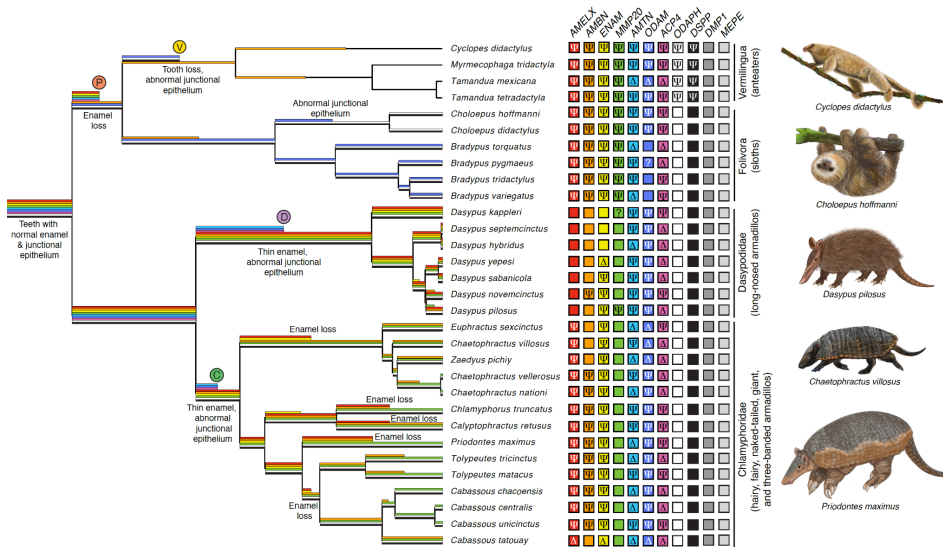
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436 The metalloproteinase-encoding *MMP20* gene is clearly pseudogenized in all pilosan species (Figure  
 437 2). Among armadillos, the data suggest a very different trend: only two species provide evidence of  
 438 inactivation, with the hairy long-nosed armadillo (*Dasypus pilosus*) having a single stop codon in exon 2,  
 439 and the northern long-nosed armadillo (*D. sabanicola*) possessing a polymorphic stop codon in exon 8. Missing  
 440 data is an issue for some exon capture sequences, but complete sequences are provided for species with  
 441 genome assemblies, suggesting that *MMP20* is indeed intact in many if not the vast majority of armadillos, a  
 442 conclusion further supported by selection pressure analyses based on dN/dS ratio (see below).

443 The genes encoding the ameloblast and gingiva-expressed amelotin (*AMTN*) and odontogenic  
 444 ameloblast-associated protein (*ODAM*) are almost universally inactivated in xenarthrans (Figure 1–3). The  
 445 lone exception is *ODAM* in the three-fingered sloths (*Bradypus* spp.), all of which fail to show evidence of  
 446 inactivation.

447 Among the two genes encoding proteins with less clear roles in enamel formation (*ACP4*, *ODAPH*),  
 448 only *ACP4* shows evidence of widespread pseudogenization, being unambiguously inactivated in every  
 449 species for which we had sufficient data (Figures 2 and 3), and further supported by patterns of shared  
 450 mutations (see below). By contrast, *ODAPH* is only inactivated in anteaters (Figure 2).

451 Finally, among the genes encoding dentinogenesis proteins (*DSPP*, *DMP1*, *MEPE*), only *DSPP* shows  
 452 evidence of inactivation, and, again, solely among the anteaters (Figure 2). *DMP1* and *MEPE* have important  
 453 roles in bone formation (Gullard et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2011), which may explain their consistent retention.



454  
 455 **Figure 1:** Dental gene inactivations across Xenarthra indicating distribution of gene losses (right) and  
 456 inferred regressive dental events based on shared inactivating mutations (SIMs) of key genes (left). Thin  
 457 enamel = evidence of inactivation in *ACP4*; abnormal junctional epithelium = evidence of inactivation in both  
 458 *AMTN* and *ODAM*; enamelless teeth = inactivation of *AMELX*; edentulous = inactivation of *ODAPH* and *DSPP*  
 459 (see text for interpretations). Branches on which gene inactivations occurred are inferred from SIMs, which  
 460 are summarized in the Results, Figures 2 and 3 and Supplementary Tables S5–S15. Gene losses in right  
 461 columns are indicated by the following: Ψ = positive evidence of pseudogenization; Δ = no positive evidence  
 462 of pseudogenization, but gene inactivation inferred from phylogenetic distribution of shared mutations; ? =  
 463 no data; empty box = gene putatively intact. Timing of gene inactivations arbitrarily placed midway on the  
 464 corresponding branch, indicated by termination of colored branch. Colors on branches correspond to genes  
 465 using the same colors on the right (e.g., *AMELX* = red, *AMBN* = orange, etc.). Colored circles with letters P, V,  
 466 C and D correspond with letters in Figures 2 and 3. Paintings by Michelle S. Fabros.

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**Supprimé:** 2). The data are patchier for the exon-capture sequences, but the genome assembly-derived sequences are all inactivated. One prominent
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**Supprimé:** Although the three-fingered sloth *ODAM* sequences are incomplete, dN/dS ratio analyses (see below) suggest that they are likely intact.
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**Supprimé:** unknown
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**Supprimé:** *ACPT*
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**Supprimé:** examined except for the screaming hairy armadillo (*Chaetophractus vellerosus*),
- Frédéric Delsuc 1/8/y 10:06  
**Supprimé:** were only able to recover two
- Frédéric Delsuc 1/8/y 10:06  
**Supprimé:** the 11 exons.
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**Supprimé:** Finally, among the genes encoding dentin-associated proteins (*DSPP*, *DMP1*, *MEPE*), only *DSPP* shows evidence of inactivation, and, again, solely among the anteaters (Figure 2). *DMP1* and *MEPE* have important roles in bone formation (Gullard et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2011), which may explain their universal retention. ... [3]
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**Supprimé:** Abnormal
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**Supprimé:** one or more of the following genes (*AMBN*, *ENAM*, *MMP20*, *ACPT*, *AMTN*);
- Frédéric Delsuc 1/8/y 10:06  
**Supprimé:** gingiva
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**Supprimé:** possibly *DSPP*.
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**Supprimé:** Figure
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**Supprimé:** Ψ = direct
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**Supprimé:** Δ = gene inactivated or deleted, as inferred from phylogenetic bracketing; ω = possible
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**Supprimé:** by dN/dS estimates; ? = unknown
- Frédéric Delsuc 1/8/y 10:06  
**Supprimé:** Figure 2. \* = possible timing of *ACPT* inactivation based on dN/dS estimates, but unclear due to absence of data from sufficient taxa.

507 **Reconstructing patterns of shared inactivating mutations**

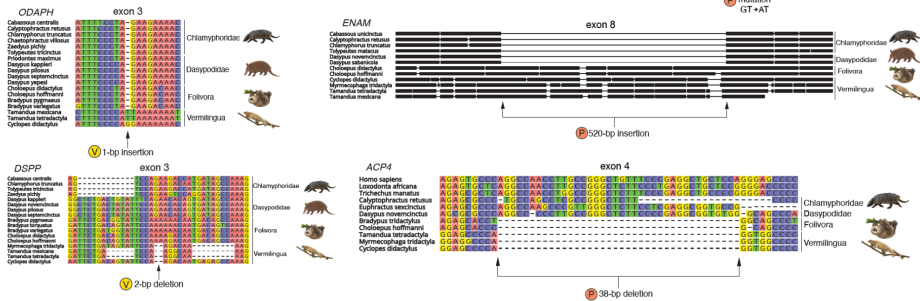
508 The presence of shared inactivating mutations (SIMs) provides strong evidence for the minimum date of  
509 pseudogenization in a lineage. If, for example, a frameshift indel or premature stop codon occurs at the same  
510 position in all species within a clade, then it is more parsimonious to assume that it was inherited from a  
511 common ancestor rather than being independently derived. Furthermore, multiple SIMs within a gene  
512 strengthen the case for shared history.

513 We found no unambiguous inactivating mutations shared among all xenarthran subclades. While we  
514 were unable to recover the complete coding sequence for every gene in every species, the phylogenetic  
515 distribution of taxa derived from whole genome sequencing means that this inference is unlikely to be  
516 the result of missing data (Supplementary Figures S3-S13). By contrast, we found multiple examples of  
517 SIMs among pilosans, dasyppodids and chlamyphorids, respectively (Figures 2 and 3, Supplementary Tables  
518 S5, S7, S8, S11, S14).

519 For pilosan-specific SIMs, all ten species we examined shared a premature stop codon in exon 4 of  
520 *AMELX*. Exon 4 of *AMTN* is followed by a splice donor mutation (GT → AT) shared by two-fingered sloths  
521 (*Choloepus* spp.) and the pygmy (*Cyclopes didactylus*) and giant (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*) anteaters. Exon 8  
522 of *ENAM* has three SIMs across pilosans, including a 1-bp deletion, premature stop codon and a roughly 520  
523 bp insertion. Among the three sloths and two anteaters for which we assembled all of exon 6 of *MMP20*,  
524 they share a 1-bp deletion. For *ACP4*, we found evidence of a 38-bp deletion in exon 4 and two 1-bp  
525 deletions in exon 7 across four sloths and three anteaters (note: the latter alignment is ambiguous and may  
526 reflect a single 2-bp deletion). Finally, exon 3 of *AMBN* is preceded by a splice acceptor mutation (AG → AT)  
527 in sloths, but this exon is missing in anteaters. While this leaves open the possibility that this gene was  
528 inactivated in a stem pilosan, the dN/dS ratio results render this possibility unlikely (see below).

GENE LEGEND

**ACP4**: encodes acid phosphatase 4, expressed in ameloblasts, inactivation associated with hypoplastic amelogenesis imperfecta (thin enamel)  
**AMELX**: encodes amelogenin, the primary enamel matrix protein (90%), expressed in ameloblasts, inactivation strongly associated with enamel dysfunction  
**AMTN**: encodes amelotin, expressed in ameloblasts and junctional epithelium, inactivation has less-clear association with enamel dysfunction, interacts with ODAM likely to maintain tight seal at tooth-gingiva border  
**DSPP**: encodes dentin sialophosphoprotein, a dentin matrix protein, expressed in odontoblasts, inactivation associated with dentin dysfunction  
**ENAM**: encodes enamelin, the 3rd most abundant enamel matrix protein, expressed in ameloblasts, inactivation strongly associated with enamel dysfunction  
**MMP20**: encodes matrix metalloproteinase 20, a matrix metalloproteinase that cleaves enamel matrix proteins into mature forms, expressed in ameloblasts, inactivation strongly associated with enamel dysfunction  
**ODAPH**: encodes odontogenesis-associated phosphoprotein, expressed in enamel organ, inactivation associated with enamel dysfunction, interspecies comparisons suggest pseudogenization associated with tooth loss as opposed to enamel loss



530 **Figure 2: DNA alignments providing examples of shared inactivating mutations indicating key dental gene**  
531 **losses in pilosans. Colored circles with the letters P and V correspond with letters in Figure 1. P = gene**  
532 **inactivation inferred on stem Pilosa branch; V = gene inactivation inferred on stem Vermilingua branch.**  
533 **Paintings by Michelle S. Fabros.**

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Supprimé: Tables S5-S15). However, there are two possible caveats to this conclusion. First, exon 11 of *ACPT* is missing from the assemblies of all the species we examined, except the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypos novemcinctus*). While *D. novemcinctus* has inactivating mutations in this exon, we cannot determine if they are unique to this species. Second, a 2-bp deletion occurs in exon 7 of the four armadillos and three sloths for which we have data (no data in anteaters), but the alignment for this indel is ambiguous (Supplementary Figure S1) and we believe this deletion is likely the result of independent events. Indeed, dN/dS analyses suggest that inactivation on the stem xenarthran branch is unlikely (see below).

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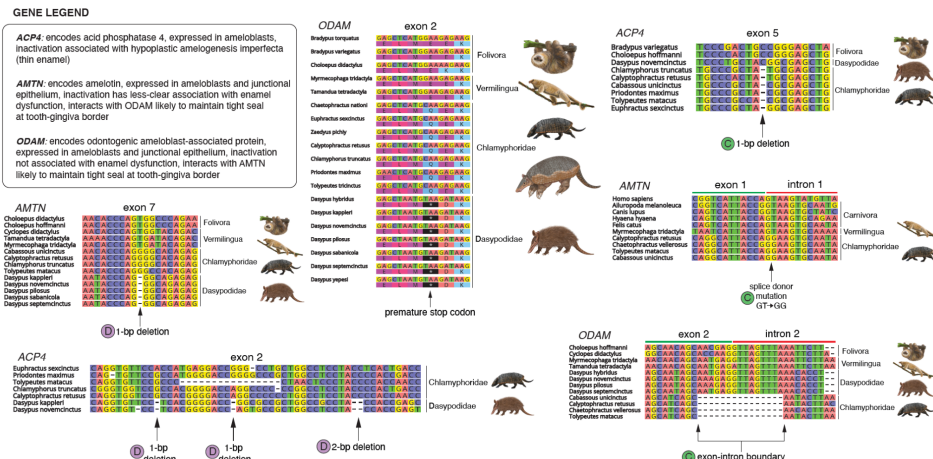
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Two genes appear to have been inactivated at minimum in a stem or crown sloth lineage (Figure 1). All sloths possess three SIMs in *AMBN*, and two-fingered sloths possess a single SIM in *ODAM* (exon 8, 10-bp deletion), with three-fingered sloths lacking any discernible inactivating mutations in *ODAM*. Four genes appear to have been lost in the stem or a crown anteater lineage (Figure 1). Anteater SIMs include a stop codon in exon 9 of *ODAM*, a 1-bp insertion in exon 3 of *ODAPH*, and a 2-bp deletion in exon 3 of *DSPP* (Figure 2). By contrast, *AMBN* only clearly possesses SIMs (four) between the giant (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*) and lesser anteaters (*Tamandua* spp.).



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Figure 3: DNA alignments providing examples of shared inactivating mutations indicating key dental gene losses in armadillos. Colored circles with letters C and D correspond with letters in Figure 1. C = gene inactivation inferred on stem Chlamyphoridae branch; D = gene inactivation inferred on stem Dasypodidae branch. Paintings by Michelle S. Fabros.

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We found no evidence of SIMs shared among all armadillos, but *AMTN*, *ODAM* and *ACP4* all contain SIMs unique to each subclade (Figure 3). Among chlamyphorids, a chlamyphorine, euphractine, and two tolpeutine armadillos possess a splice donor mutation in intron 1 of *AMTN* (GT → GG), and the same species share a 15-bp deletion of the splice donor region of intron 2 in *ODAM*. For *ACP4*, there is a 1-bp deletion in exon 5 and a splice acceptor mutation (GT → GG) in intron 5 among both chlamyphorines, three tolpeutines, and euphractines. Among dasypodids, a 1-bp deletion is found in exon 7 of *AMTN*, *ODAM* has premature stop codons in exons 4 and 9, and *ACP4* has at minimum 13 SIMs across at least five exons. Note that we did not recover exon 1 of *AMTN* in any dasypodids, which means that the splice donor mutation found in chlamyphorids could be shared among all armadillos. dN/dS analyses suggest this is a viable but uncertain possibility (see below).

Among the other genes, the pattern of SIMs in armadillos is much patchier (Figure 1). *AMBN*, for instance, only has shared mutations among congeners. By contrast, *AMELX* has SIMs in euphractines and tolpeutines, respectively, but none in chlamyphorines. Finally, *ENAM* possesses SIMs unique to all euphractines, chlamyphorines, and probably tolpeutines, respectively, and within dasypodids, *Dasypus novemcinctus* and *D. pilosus* share a splice donor mutation (AG → AT, intron 4) and *D. novemcinctus* and *D. sabanicola* share a 1-bp insertion (exon 8).

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Supprimé: . For instance, a three-fingered sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*) and the two-fingered sloths have at least 17 SIMs in *ACPT*, and

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Supprimé: shared deletion of both exons 2 and 3 in *ACPT*, a

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Supprimé: (*Calyptophractus retusus*), a

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Supprimé: (*Chaetophractus vellerosus*)

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Supprimé: (*Cabassou uncinatus*, *Tolypeutes matacus*)

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Supprimé: . *ACPT* may well have been disabled prior to crown Chlamyphoridae, based on mutations shared by chlamyphorines and tolpeutines (1-bp del, exon 5; splice acceptor GT → GG, intron 5), but the only euphractine sequence (*Chaetophractus vellerosus*) is missing data from the relevant

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627 **Selection pressure analyses**

628 Given that shared inactivating mutations provide only a minimum probable date for inactivation, they  
 629 may underestimate the timing of the onset of relaxed selection on a gene. Gene dysfunction may predate  
 630 the fixation of a frameshift indel or premature stop codon, e.g., due to disruption of non-coding elements. In  
 631 order to evaluate changes in selection pressure resulting from dental regression, we first reconstructed the  
 632 global variation in dN/dS across the placental phylogeny (Figure 4) using the program Coevol, which  
 633 implements a form of rate smoothing through the incorporation of a Brownian motion model of continuous  
 634 trait evolution. These analyses allow for the visualization and localization of shifts in selection pressure that  
 635 have occurred within xenarthrans, likely corresponding to relaxed selection and pseudogenization events in  
 636 the 11 focal dental genes.

637 The reconstructed patterns of relaxed selection were similar among genes encoding enamel matrix  
 638 proteins (*AMELX*, *AMBN*, *ENAM*) (Figure 4A), with generally elevated dN/dS ratios trending towards an  $\omega$  of  
 639 1. Consistent with the patterns of pseudogenization, *MMP20* shows elevated  $\omega$  in pilosans, but distinctly  
 640 lower estimates in armadillos (Figure 4A). Among the dento-gingival junction genes (*AMTN*, *ODAM*) (Figure  
 641 4B), *ODAM* shows a pattern similar to the enamel matrix proteins, whereas *AMTN* does not trend as strongly  
 642 towards relaxed selection, despite evidence of pseudogenization in all xenarthrans. Among genes with  
 643 unknown enamel functions, *ACP4* shows perhaps the greatest contrast between xenarthrans (relaxed  
 644 selection) and the outgroup taxa (purifying selection), whereas *ODAPH* has more muted differences between  
 645 the pseudogenes in vermillinguans and other branches (Figure 4B). For the dentinogenesis genes, the  
 646 elevated pilosan *DSPP* branches contrast with other branches, whereas *DMP1* and *MEPE* seem to suggest  
 647 minimal differences between xenarthran and other placental mammal branches (Figure 4C). Moreover, these  
 648 analyses revealed that some transitional branches where gene inactivation was inferred based on SIMs have  
 649 elevated dN/dS values. This was particularly evident for the Pilosa ancestral branch in which we identified  
 650 SIMs in many different genes (*AMELX*, *ENAM*, *MMP20*, *AMTN*, and *ACP4*) (Figure 4A,B). Finally, these results  
 651 helped pinpoint potential shifts in relaxed selection on branches predating the occurrence of SIMs such as  
 652 the Cingulata ancestral branch in *AMTN*, *ODAM*, and *ACP4* in which the two main armadillo families  
 653 (*Dasyproctidae* and *Chlamyphoridae*) presented evidence of independent SIMs (Figure 4B).

654 While the Coevol results suggested potential shifts in selection on branches predating the occurrence of  
 655 SIMs, we tested whether such inferences were supported statistically by likelihood ratio tests. We therefore  
 656 performed dN/dS branch model analyses using *codeml* in *PAML* to estimate the selective pressure  
 657 experienced by the 11 dental genes on branches that predate the timing of inactivating mutations in  
 658 xenarthrans (Supplementary Tables S16-S26; Supplementary Figures S14-S24). These branch model analyses  
 659 (Yang, 1998; Yang and Nielsen, 1998) estimate how natural selection is acting on a gene by comparing the  
 660 ratio ( $\omega$ ) of nonsynonymous substitutions (dN) to synonymous substitutions (dS) accumulated in a gene on a  
 661 given branch or set of branches on a phylogeny.  $\omega < 1$  suggests conservation of protein sequence (purifying  
 662 selection) on average across the gene on that branch,  $\omega > 1$  is consistent with change in protein function  
 663 (positive selection), and  $\omega = 1$  is associated with relaxed selection, which is the pattern expected for  
 664 pseudogenes. However, on a phylogenetic branch that has a mixed history, such as purifying selection  
 665 followed by relaxed selection,  $\omega$  should be intermediate between the average strength of selection and one  
 666 (Meredith et al., 2009). As such, we estimated the average background  $\omega$ , and tested whether key branches  
 667 were statistically elevated or lowered compared to this background selection pattern and an  $\omega$  of 1.

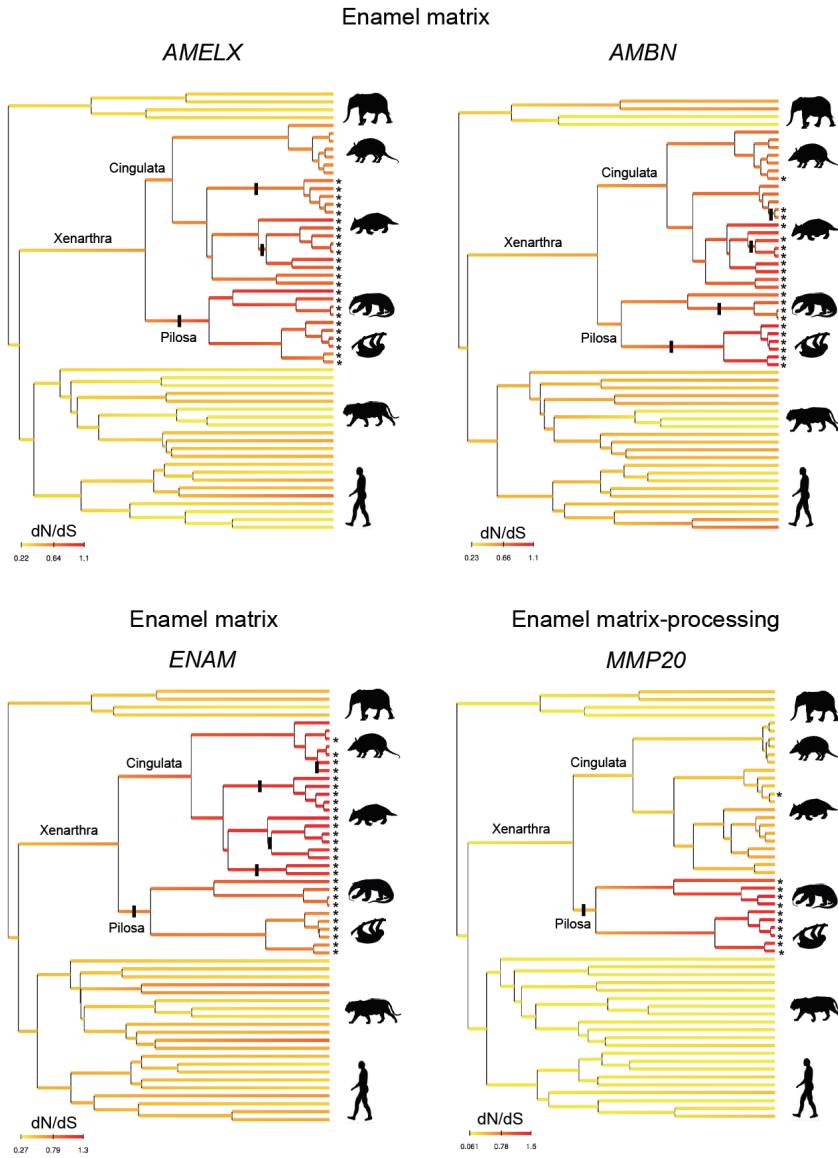
668 We first tested whether  $\omega$  was ever elevated on branches that predated the earliest SIMs and found  
 669 several such examples. For instance, *AMELX* possesses a SIM for *Cabassous* + *Tolypeutes*, with the sister  
 670 taxon *Priodontes* only possessing unique mutations. However, the branch immediately ancestral to these  
 671 armadillos (stem *Tolypeutinae*) has an elevated  $\omega$  (2.29, versus background of 0.33 [ $p = 0.035$ ]), suggesting  
 672 relaxed selection on *AMELX* began on this branch. Similarly, *ENAM* has a SIM for *Cabassous* + *Tolypeutes*, but  
 673 not for *Priodontes*, but again model comparisons suggest relaxed selection began on the stem *Tolypeutinae*  
 674 branch ( $\omega = 1.21$ , versus background of 0.52 [ $p = 0.022$ ]).

675 Given such examples, we tested whether elevated  $\omega$  estimates could be found on the two  
 676 xenarthran branches that predate any SIMs: stem Xenarthra and stem Cingulata. For the stem xenarthran  
 677 branch, we found a single example where a gene had  $\omega$  statistically distinguishable from the background  
 678 (*ACP4* = 0.57, versus background of 0.18), although this was only marginally significant ( $p = 0.049$ ). By  
 679 contrast, five of the 11 genes had signals consistent with purifying selection (*AMELX* [ $\omega = 0.0001$ ], *DMP1* [ $\omega =$   
 680 0.37], *ENAM* [ $\omega = 0.48$ ], *MMP20* [ $\omega = 0.2$ ], *ODAPH* [ $\omega = 0.14$ ]), being statistically distinguishable from 1 but

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Déplacé (insertion) [1]
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Supprimé:  $\omega$  should be intermediate between the average strength of selection and one (Meredith et al., 2009). As such, we estimated the average background  $\omega$ ,
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705 not from the background. *ODAPH* had an  $\omega$  so low that it was statistically distinguishable from both  $\omega_1$  and the  
 706 background ( $\omega = 0.48$ ). For the stem Cingulata branch, 10 of the 11 genes showed no evidence of elevated  $\omega$ ,  
 707 with five instead being consistent with purifying selection (*ACP4* [ $\omega = 0.1$ ], *AMB1* [ $\omega = 0.17$ ], *DMP1* [ $\omega =$   
 708 0.34], *MMP20* [ $\omega = 0.12$ ], *ODAPH* [ $\omega = 0.32$ ]). For *AMB1*,  $\omega$  was so low that it was distinct from the  
 709 background ( $\omega = 0.41$ ). The one example of an elevated  $\omega$  was *DSPP* ( $\omega = 1.46$ ), though we found no evidence  
 710 of inactivation in this dentin-specific gene among the dentin-retaining armadillos.

A.

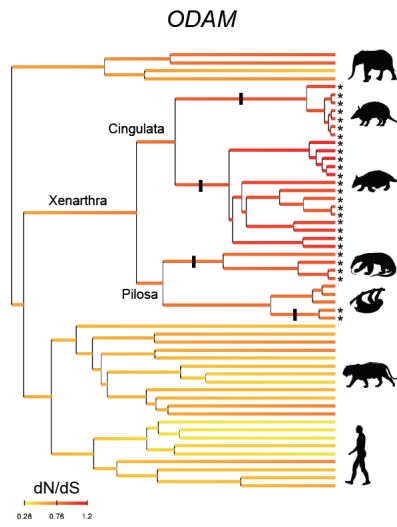
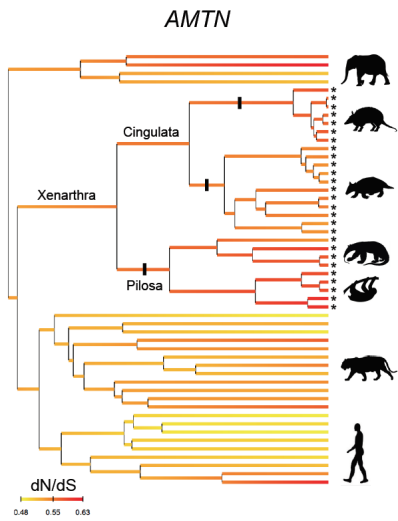


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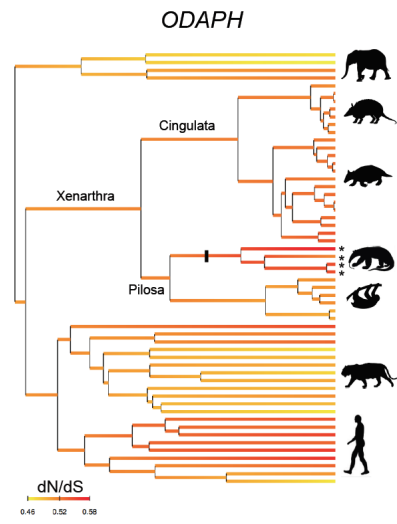
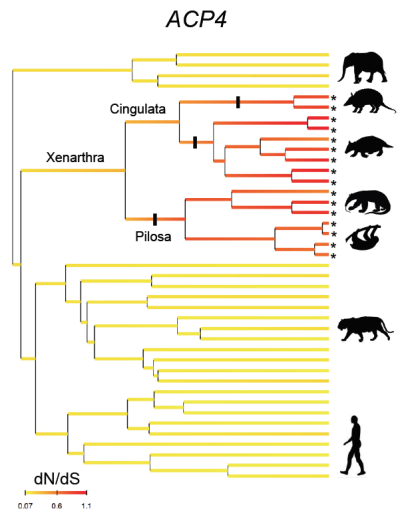
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B.

Dento-gingival junction



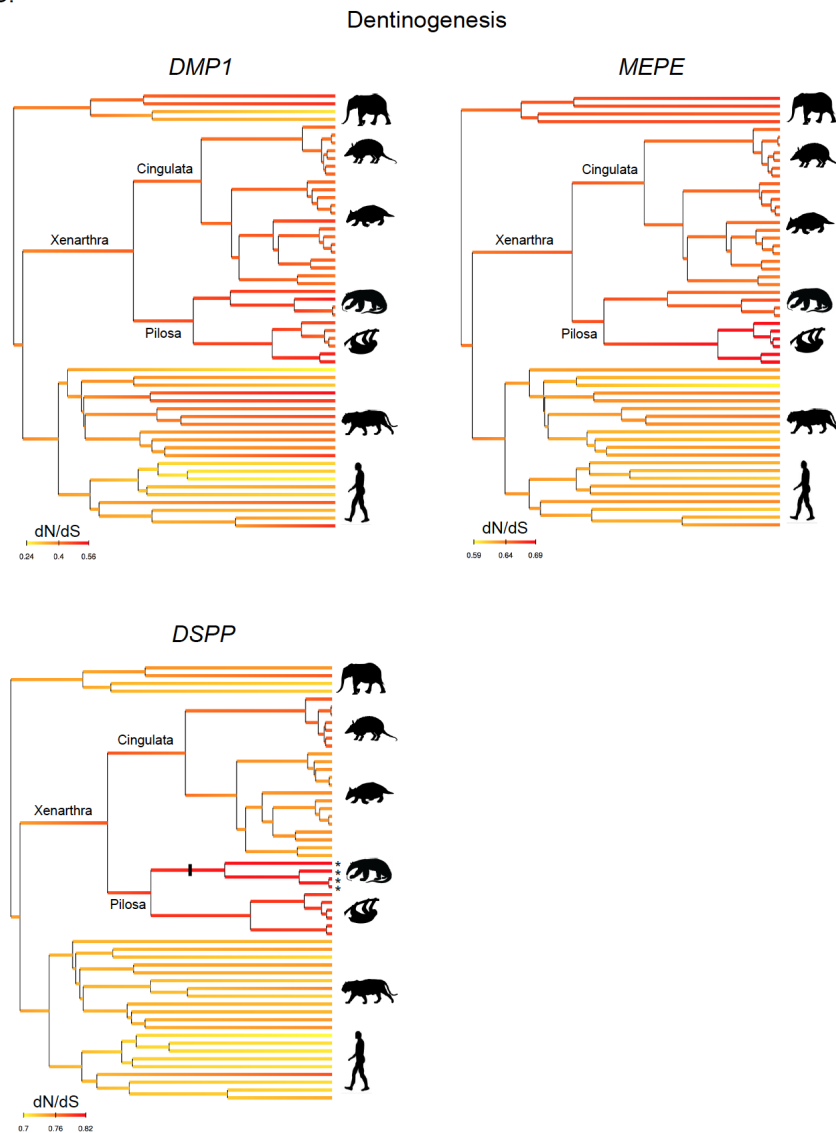
Unknown enamel function



Unknown

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C.



**Figure 4:** Bayesian reconstruction of dN/dS for 11 dental genes across the placental phylogeny with focus on xenarthrans (armadillos, anteaters, and sloths). **A.** Enamel matrix (*AMELX*, *AMBN*, *ENAM*) and enamel processing (*MMP20*) genes. **B.** Dento-gingival junction (*AMTN*, *ODAM*) and unknown enamel function (*ACP4*, *ODAPH*) genes. **C.** Dentinogenesis genes (*DMP1*, *MEPE*, *DSPP*). Asterisks at the tips of terminal branches identify non-functional sequences (pseudogenes) and bars on branches indicate shared inactivating mutations (SIMs). Detailed trees are provided as Supplementary Figures S25-S35. Silhouettes were obtained from PhyloPic (<http://phylopic.org/>).

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**Déplacé vers le haut [1]:** These analyses allow for the visualization and localization of shifts in selection pressure that have occurred within xenarthrans, likely corresponding to relaxed selection and pseudogenization events in the 11 focal dental genes.

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**Supprimé:** 3; Supplementary Figures S14-S24) using the program Coevol, which implements a form of rate smoothing through the incorporation of a Brownian motion model of continuous trait evolution.

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**Supprimé:** The reconstructed patterns of relaxed selection were strikingly similar among genes involved in the same function during tooth development with enamel matrix-structure (*AMELX*, *AMBN*, *ENAM*), enamel junction-associated (*AMTN*, *ODAM*), and enamel matrix-processing (*ACP4*, *MMP20*) genes presenting clear traces of relaxed selection in specific xenarthran branches (Figure 3). ...[6]

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**Supprimé:** The variation of dN/dS was jointly reconstructed with divergence times while controlling the effect of three life-history traits (body mass, longevity, and sexual maturity).

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**Supprimé:** ). The tree is rooted with Afrotheria as the sister-group to all other placentals.

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**Supprimé:** S13-S23

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**Supprimé:** <http://phylopic.org/>.

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## Discussion

768 **Reconstructing the dental regression history of xenarthrans**

769 Our results suggest that certain major regressive events in the dental history of xenarthrans took place  
 770 independently and in a gradual, stepwise fashion. Four lines of evidence suggest that this regression  
 771 occurred in parallel in the three main xenarthran lineages rather than in their last common ancestor. First,  
 772 among the nine genes that would ultimately become pseudogenes in at least some xenarthrans, no  
 773 unambiguous shared inactivating mutations (SIMs) were inferred for the entire xenarthran clade. Second, no  
 774 SIMs were found between the two major armadillo clades despite the last common ancestor of cingulates  
 775 dating to roughly 23 million years after the origin of Xenarthra (Gibb et al., 2016). Third, while we found  
 776 evidence of elevated dN/dS for a single gene (ACP4) on the stem xenarthran branch, this estimate was only  
 777 marginally significant and the descendant Cingulata branch showed purifying selection on this gene. By  
 778 contrast, we found five genes showing statistically significant purifying selection on this branch, three of  
 779 which are enamel-specific genes with widespread patterns of pseudogenization in vertebrates with dental  
 780 regression (AMELX, ENAM, MMP20) (Meredith et al., 2009, 2011a, 2013, 2014; Choo et al., 2016). Fourth,  
 781 the same can be said for the stem armadillo branch, on which five genes were also statistically consistent  
 782 with purifying selection, with only the dentin-specific DSPP having a statistically elevated  $\omega$ , despite never  
 783 being inactivated in any armadillos.

784 These four lines of evidence predict that the last common ancestor (LCA) of xenarthrans, the stem-  
 785 cingulate lineage, and the LCA of Cingulata all had teeth covered with enamel, with descendant lineages  
 786 subsequently deriving thin enamel (dasypodid armadillos), losing enamel (chlamyphorid armadillos, sloths)  
 787 or losing teeth entirely (anteaters). However, this does not negate the possibility, nor indeed the likelihood,  
 788 that some degree of tooth simplification had already occurred by the last common ancestor of xenarthrans  
 789 and/or armadillos. Notably, the two earliest armadillo fossils that preserve teeth, which are roughly coeval  
 790 with molecular estimates of the LCA of cingulates (Gibb et al., 2016), have simple, peg-like teeth with thin  
 791 enamel, although they differ in whether the enamel wore easily (Utaetus buccatus [42–39 Mya]) or not  
 792 (Astegotherium dichotomus [45 mya]). Notably, the former is a putative chlamyphorid relative, and the latter  
 793 is considered a relative of dasypodids (Ciancio et al., 2014; Simpson, 1932). Their enamel is reminiscent of  
 794 phenotypes that can arise from amelogenesis imperfecta (AI), a condition that can lead to the formation of  
 795 thin, soft and/or brittle enamel that wears away with time, which can be caused by the inactivation a  
 796 number of the numerous enamel-associated genes (Smith et al., 2017). It remains possible that non-coding  
 797 mutations leading to dental regression could have accumulated prior to the mutations more typically  
 798 characteristic of pseudogenes, at least by the origin of cingulates, a potentially fruitful avenue for future  
 799 research.

800 After the origin of cingulates, our data suggest that AMTN, ODAM and ACP4 were independently  
 801 inactivated in stem chlamyphorid and stem dasypodid armadillos by at least 37 Mya and 12 Mya (Figures 1  
 802 and 3), respectively (Gibb et al., 2016). The proteins produced by the former two genes, AMTN and ODAM,  
 803 are both expressed in enamel-producing ameloblasts (Fouillen et al., 2017), but their link to enamel integrity  
 804 is tenuous. Though the deletion of exons 3-6 in AMTN has been linked to AI in humans (Smith et al., 2016),  
 805 mouse knockouts display a minimally-affected dental phenotype (Nakayama et al., 2015). Specifically,  
 806 mandibular incisors have chalky enamel, which begins to chip away after 13 weeks of age, but maxillary  
 807 incisors and molars show no significant alterations. ODAM knockout mice do not seem to have affected  
 808 enamel whatsoever (Wazen et al., 2015), and this gene has not been implicated in enamel malformations in  
 809 humans (Smith et al., 2017). Both proteins, however, continue to be expressed throughout adulthood in the  
 810 junctional epithelium (Ganss and Abbarin, 2014). These proteins appear to congregate into an extracellular  
 811 matrix to maintain a tight seal between the gingiva and teeth (Fouillen et al., 2017), presumably to protect  
 812 the teeth from microbial exposure (Lee et al., 2015). Notably, ODAM knockout mice show a decreased ability  
 813 to heal the junctional epithelium after damage (Wazen et al., 2015), lending credence to this hypothesis.  
 814 ACP4's function is less well-known, but it is expressed during amelogenesis (Seyman et al., 2016) and  
 815 disabling mutations in this gene leads to hypoplastic AI, leading to thin enamel (Kim et al., 2022; Liang et al.,  
 816 2022; Seyman et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2017). Accordingly, the losses of both AMTN, ODAM and ACP4 in

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**Supprimé:** The single putative SIM, a 2-bp deletion in ACPT, has dubious homology between armadillos and sloths, and dN/dS ratio analyses are not consistent with relaxed selection acting on the immediate descendant branches.

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**Supprimé:** any one of

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**Supprimé:** independently inactivated AMTN and ODAM

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**Supprimé:** expressed

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**Supprimé:** amelogenesis imperfecta

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**Supprimé:** Accordingly, the losses of both AMTN and ODAM

839 stem chlamyphorids and stem dasypodids, respectively, point to a weakening of the gingiva-tooth  
840 association and [a thinning of enamel during the origins of these subclades](#).

841 After the origin of chlamyphorids (37 Mya), we inferred that further pseudogenizations of AMBN, AMELX,  
842 and ENAM took place, apparently in parallel (Figure 1). Disabling any of these [three](#) genes, all of which are  
843 expressed in ameloblasts, is associated with AI (Lagerström et al., 1991; Poulter et al., 2014; Rajpar, 2001;  
844 Seymen et al., 2016), leaving little doubt that enamel regression and eventually loss occurred during the  
845 diversification of this clade. Curiously, MMP20 appears universally intact in chlamyphorids but shows  
846 evidence of elevated dN/dS estimates, possibly indicating a change in function for this gene that is otherwise  
847 strongly linked to enamel development (Meredith et al., 2011a, 2013, 2014; Smith et al., 2017).

848 By contrast, the comparably late and minimal degree of pseudogenization in dasypodids may explain the  
849 retention of vestigial enamel on the milk teeth and thin, easily worn enamel on the permanent teeth of  
850 dasypodids (Ciancio et al., 2021; Martin, 1916; Spurgin, 1904). [After the stem loss of AMTN, ODAM and](#)  
851 [ACP4](#), ENAM is the only gene with clear evidence of pseudogenization in multiple dasypodids, [implying a](#)  
852 [delay in the historical timing of dental degeneration compared to chlamyphorids](#). The pattern of gene  
853 inactivation in dasypodids is notable in that ENAM is inactivated in several species and Dasypus  
854 novemcinctus has pseudogenic ENAM, AMBN and [ACP4](#), yet thin regressive enamel is still present in these  
855 species (Ciancio et al., 2021; Martin, 1916; Spurgin, 1904). This suggests that inactivation of these genes  
856 individually or in concert is insufficient for complete enamel loss. [Notably](#), AMELX appears intact in all  
857 dasypodids, [and was under purifying selection on the stem dasypodid branch](#), yet is pseudogenic in all  
858 pilosans and chlamyphorids sampled. This implies that AMELX may be a strong indicator for the timing of  
859 enamel loss in xenarthrans, a possibility made more plausible by its [critical](#) function (see below). If correct,  
860 enamel loss appears to have occurred up to five times independently within Chlamyphoridae based on SIMs  
861 (Figure 1).

862 In Pilosa, our results suggest that the first eight million years of their history (Gibb et al., 2016) resulted in  
863 a relatively rapid regression of their dentition. Specifically, we inferred that AMTN, AMELX, ENAM, [MMP20](#)  
864 and [ACP4](#) all became pseudogenes prior to the last common ancestor of pilosans ([Figures 1 and 2](#)). Enamel-  
865 forming ameloblasts express the enamel matrix proteins (EMPs) AMELX and ENAM, both of which are  
866 processed into their mature peptide forms by the metalloproteinase MMP20 (Smith et al., 2017). Building off  
867 an earlier study of ENAM (Meredith et al., 2009), this strongly suggests that enamel was completely lost by  
868 the earliest pilosans, particularly given that AMELX makes up to 90% of the EMP composition and MMP20 is  
869 critical for processing the EMPs AMELX, AMBN and ENAM (Smith et al., 2017). The earliest tooth-bearing  
870 fossil pilosans is a stem sloth (Pseudoglyptodon) dating to the early Oligocene (32 Mya) (McKenna et al.,  
871 2006), well after the estimate for the earliest pilosans (58 Mya) (Gibb et al., 2016). As predicted,  
872 Pseudoglyptodon lacks enamel, but our results predict the future discovery of enamelless stem and/or crown  
873 pilosans in the Paleocene.

874 Our results further suggest that stem vermilinguans inherited this enamelless condition, and then  
875 [continued dental regression to the point of complete tooth loss](#). In addition to all modern anteaters being  
876 edentulous, we found a [putative shared](#) mutation in ODAPH that suggests complete tooth loss occurred by  
877 the origin of Vermilingua (38 Mya) (Gibb et al., 2016). Although ODAPH is considered to be important in  
878 enamel formation ([Parry et al., 2012; Prasad et al., 2016](#)), a comparative study of this gene in placental  
879 mammals [suggested](#) that it is uniquely inactivated in [the edentulous baleen whales and pangolins](#) (Springer  
880 et al., [2016](#)) [Our results support the hypothesis that ODAPH has a critical function outside of enamel](#)  
881 [formation](#). Perhaps more convincing is the evidence suggesting pseudogenization of the dentin-matrix  
882 protein DSPP in a stem vermilinguan (Figure 2). Inactivation of DSPP leads to dentinogenesis imperfecta in  
883 humans (Xiao et al., 2001) and dentin defects in knockout mice (Sreenath et al., 2003), increasing the  
884 likelihood that tooth loss occurred prior to the origin of this clade. The earliest known anteater, the  
885 edentulous Protamandua (Gaudin and Branham, 1998), dates back to the Santacrucian (17.5–16.3 Mya), but  
886 our results predict toothless stem vermilinguans likely dating to the Eocene, between 58 and 38 Mya (Gibb et  
887 al., 2016).

#### 889 **Broader implications for regressive evolution**

890 Our results reveal a few noteworthy patterns that may inform the study of regressive evolution in other  
891 systems. First, these data provide genomic evidence that trait loss can take place in a stepwise manner. Fossil  
892 evidence implies that both turtles and birds lost their teeth gradually: turtles first lost marginal dentition,

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**Supprimé:** possibly minimal enamel degeneration. The latter is further suggested by evidence of relaxed selection on ENAM on both stem branches

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**Supprimé:** Only ACPT shows evidence of early pseudogenization in dasypodids, based on

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**Supprimé:** large number of inactivating mutations

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**Supprimé:** high  $\omega$  estimate in Dasypus novemcinctus, and

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917 followed by palatal teeth (Li et al., 2008), and birds lost premaxillary teeth prior to becoming completely  
918 edentulous (Meredith et al., 2014). Xenarthran dental genes point to a third path towards this phenotype,  
919 with discrete events of enamel loss followed by tooth loss in the evolution of anteaters, based on shared and  
920 distinct pseudogenization signals in vermilinguans and sloths. This dental regression scenario was also  
921 recently inferred in a study on the evolution of baleen whales (Mysticeti) based on a similar comparison of  
922 dental genes (Randall et al., 2022).

923 Second, our results suggest that regressive evolution can vary broadly in timespan and pattern. Although  
924 we inferred that enamel loss occurred in stem pilosans within an eight million year window, dasypodid  
925 dentition, by contrast, appears to be the product of a much lengthier period of regression. The earliest  
926 putative crown cingulate fossils have simplified teeth with thin enamel and date back to 45 Mya (Ciancio et  
927 al., 2014). Assuming that these taxa represent the ancestral condition for crown armadillos, then the loss of  
928 ODAM, AMTN and ACP4 in a stem dasypodid, inactivation of ENAM in several crown dasypodids, and  
929 individual examples of MMP20 and AMBN pseudogenization, imply a protracted and evidently episodic,  
930 pattern of regression in this lineage.

931 Finally, these data provide insights into how the regression of traits, such as the weakening or wholesale  
932 loss of enamel, may constrain the evolutionary trajectories lineages can take. The simplification and loss of  
933 teeth is a relatively common phenomenon in mammals, with most such species having diets characterized as  
934 being myrmecophagous (ants and/or termites), vermivorous (soft-bodied worms) or nectarivorous (Charles  
935 et al., 2013; Davit-Béal et al., 2009; Freeman, 1995; Rosenberg and Richardson, 1995). Presumably the  
936 simplification or loss of teeth in such taxa is due to the softness of their prey (vermivores) or reliance on the  
937 tongue for food acquisition and minimized need for mastication (myrmecophagy, nectarivory). Notably,  
938 vermilinguan xenarthrans are myrmecophagous, and most armadillos at least partially, and at most  
939 extensively, consume social insects (Nowak, 1999), so possessing simplified teeth or being edentulous likely  
940 reinforces this diet. Reconstructions of chitinase genes in the earliest pilosans suggest that they were likely  
941 highly insectivorous (Emerling et al., 2018), indicating myrmecophagy is a plausible explanation for their early  
942 dental regression. However, after deriving enamelless teeth in stem pilosans, sloths predominantly became  
943 herbivores (Nowak, 1999; Saarinén and Karme, 2017). In contrast to the simplified, enamelless teeth present  
944 in sloths, other extant herbivorous mammals have enamel-capped teeth that tend towards an increased  
945 complexity of tooth cusps (Ungar, 2010). Yet, whereas anteaters continued the trend towards dental  
946 simplification with complete tooth loss, natural selection likely strongly favored the retention of teeth in  
947 sloths, as evidenced by the signal of purifying selection found in ODAPH on the stem sloth branch, with  
948 elevated dN/dS values on the dentin-associated genes DMP1 and MEPE (Figure 4; Supplementary Figures  
949 S18, S21, S24) potentially pointing to positive selection resulting in functional changes to sloth dentin.

950 In summary, our results show how pseudogenes can provide insights into the deep evolutionary history of  
951 a clade, and point to the divergent paths that regressive evolution can take. Understanding of this system  
952 would be enhanced by analyzing non-coding elements and functional data, given that mutations outside of  
953 the protein-coding regions of these genes may pre-date frameshift indels, premature stop codons, and  
954 similar inactivating mutations. Furthermore, as new tooth-specific genes are discovered, they may provide  
955 further resolution to our understanding of this question.  
956

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Supprimé: Further study of other systems may provide additional clarity into how traits simplify and degenerate over time.



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990 statistical analyses benefited from the Montpellier Bioinformatics Biodiversity platform (MBB). This is  
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## 992 **Data, scripts, code, and supplementary information availability**

993 Data are available online: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8005757>  
994 Scripts and code are available online: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8005757>  
995 Supplementary information is available online: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8005757>

## 996 **Conflict of interest disclosure**

997 The authors declare that they comply with the PCI rule of having no financial conflicts of interest in relation  
998 to the content of the article. The authors declare the following non-financial conflict of interest: Frédéric  
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