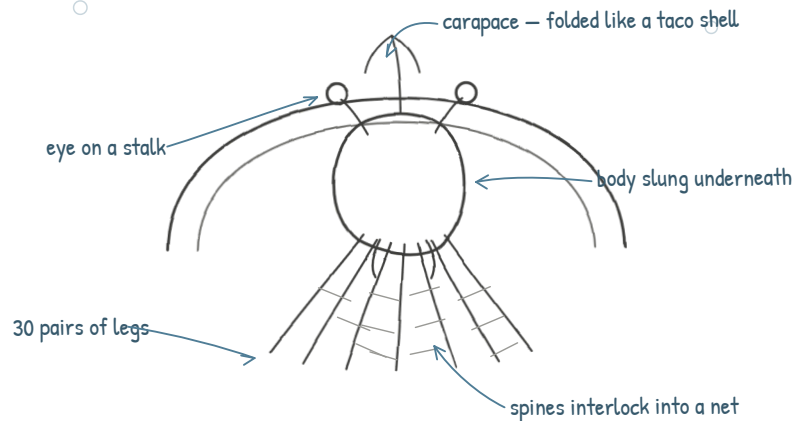


The Taco Fossil

It had thirty pairs of legs, and researchers can still count the spines on them. That is the strange part — spines are exactly what should have rotted away first.



Cross-section, head-on: the carapace arches over the body, with spines running between neighbouring legs.

○ A century-old fossil, read again

Odaraia alata (oh-dah-RYE-ah) came out of the Burgess Shale in British Columbia about a hundred years ago. For most of that time nobody could say confidently what it was related to. In 2024, palaeontologists Alejandro Izquierdo-López and Jean-Bernard Caron published a fresh study of the specimens and reported details nobody had noticed before. The animal was roughly 20 cm (8 in) long, with a hard upper shell — a **carapace** — folded over its body in a shape that reminded reporters of a taco.

○ What the new study found

The key find was a pair of jagged appendages beside the mouth: **mandibles**, a kind of jaw. That one feature let the researchers finally place *Odaraia* among the mandibulates — the enormous group that today includes insects and crustaceans. Working through its thirty-plus pairs of legs, they also found large and small spines arranged so they could interlock. Their reading is that the spines worked like a net, trapping small prey while the animal swam, and that this shows how some early mandibulates left the sea floor to make a living in open water.

○ "Early" does not mean "simple"

Mainstream geologists date the Burgess Shale to more than 500 million years — very early in the evolutionary account. But nothing about *Odaraia* is crude. Thirty pairs of intricate limbs, an interlocking filter system, jaws, and stalked eyes are not a rough first draft. Creation Ministries International argues that this is the pattern across these rocks: the Cambrian layers hold a startling range of fully-formed body plans with no obvious ancestors below them — the "Cambrian Explosion" — and that this is a genuine difficulty for a slow, step-by-step story.

○ Why the spines are still there

Here is the part that limits any explanation. When an arthropod dies on the sea floor, scavengers and bacteria start work within hours, and the finest structures go first — structures exactly like the leg spines the 2024 study depended on. For that detail to survive, the animal had to be buried quickly and deeply enough to shut out oxygen and scavengers. The quality of the fossil is itself a measurement of how fast it was covered.

○ Why this points to God

✓ THE OBSERVATION

The **preservation is extraordinary, and nobody disputes it**. The 2024 reclassification was only possible because mandibles and fine leg spines survived — the kind of anatomy that normally vanishes without a trace.

✓ THE TENSION

That level of detail demands rapid burial. Mainstream palaeontologists agree, and explain it with local underwater mudslides sweeping across the sea floor. That accounts for one site well. The harder question is why layers packed with rapidly-buried sea creatures turn up on continent after continent.

✓ THE FIT

Genesis describes exactly that kind of event. When "the fountains of the great deep burst open" (Genesis 7:11), water and sediment moved on a scale that would bury marine life fast and in vast numbers. On that reading, a fossil like *Odaraia* is what you would expect to find — and the creature was intricate long before anything buried it.

"Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you. The fish of the sea will declare to you."

— Job 12:8, WEB

The rock is a record either way. What is worth sitting with is what kind of event leaves something that delicate intact at all.

Adapted for readers 12–16 from "Taco-like fossil from the Burgess Shale was buried rapidly" [creation.com/en/articles/fossil-taco] by Philip Bell, Creation Ministries International. Details of the 2024 study from Izquierdo-López, A. & Caron, J-B., *Proc. R. Soc. B* 291:20240622, as cited in that article.

Bible verse from the World English Bible (public domain).

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