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An ancient mother

Cretaceous insects

Apr 4th 2015 | From the print edition



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Amber is wonderful for preserving fossils. Not quite as good as Michael Crichton suggested in "Jurassic Park", but impressive nonetheless. This particular specimen, from northern Myanmar, is a scale insect that lived 100m years ago, during the Cretaceous period, when dinosaurs flourished. It is by far the earliest evidence of "brood care": the creature is carrying about 60 eggs in a waxy sac on her abdomen, and is accompanied in her resin tomb by six nymphs, presumably also hers (along with an unfortunate weevil). Wang Bo of the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology and his colleagues describe their find, which they have called *Wafiondara kotzei* after a Buddhist earth goddess, in *eLife*.

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