

Kyhytysuka sachicarum

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In news- A team of researchers has discovered a new marine reptile in Central Columbia and the specimen, with a metre-long skull, has been named *Kyhytysuka sachicarum*.

About *Kyhytysuka sachicarum*-

- ***Kyhytysuka* means 'the one that cuts with something sharp'** in an indigenous language from the region in central Colombia.
- It has been **named so to honour the ancient Muisca culture** that existed there for millennia.
- ***Kyhytysuka* was a mid-sized ophthalmosaurus** with heterodont dentition and several adaptations suggesting that it was a macropredatory vertebrate hunter living in shallow waters.
- The animal **shows the evolution of a unique arsenal of teeth to devour its prey** against other ichthyosaurs that had small, equally sized teeth for feeding on small prey.
- The **researchers compared it with other Jurassic and Cretaceous ichthyosaurs and defined a new type of ichthyosaur.**
- The first definitive ichthyosaur remains in Colombia were discovered in the 1970s in the Paja Formation of Villa de Leyva.
- Whereas other ichthyosaurs had small, equally sized teeth for feeding on small prey, this new species modified its tooth sizes and spacing to build an arsenal of teeth for dispatching large prey, like big fishes and other marine reptiles.
- **The species comes from an important transitional time during the Early Cretaceous period when the Earth was coming out of a relatively cool period,** had rising sea levels, and the supercontinent Pangea was splitting into northern and southern landmasses.

