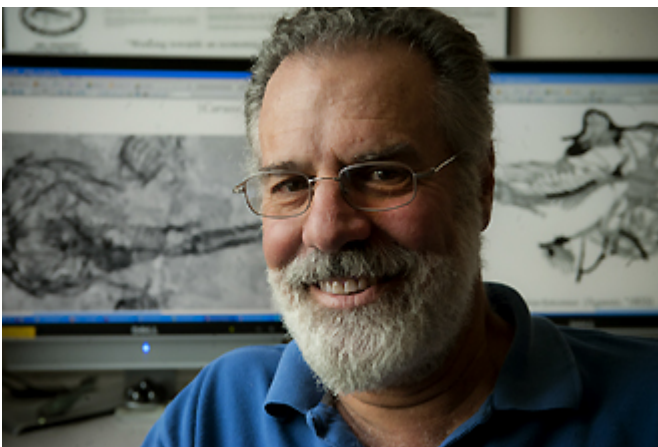


A fish story from prehistory

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Fish biologists have named a newly identified genus of fossil anglerfishes after Tulane ichthyologist John H. Caruso. "It's a tremendous honor having a taxon named after you, especially a genus," says Caruso. "It's one of the top honors one can get in systematic biology."



"It's a tremendous honor," says Tulane ichthyologist John H. Caruso, whose name has been given to a new genus of fossil anglerfishes. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Anglerfish are toothy, fearsome-looking marine fishes that feed by attracting their prey in a unique way.



This modern-day relative of the *Caruso* anglerfish lives in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean, says professor John H. Caruso.

“Probably the most unusual thing about them is how they get their name?they angle for other fishes,” says Caruso, a professor of practice in the Tulane Department of [Ecology and Evolutionary Biology](#). “One of their dorsal fin spines, the foremost, is modified essentially as a fishing pole, an angling apparatus. It has a 'bait' at the end of it. The fish wiggles it in the water and attracts other fishes.”

Then the anglerfish's second amazing adaption comes into play. “Anglerfish have phenomenally hypertrophied jawbones and a greatly enlarged mouth cavity, and they can open and close their mouths very fast, creating tremendous suction,” says Caruso. “That makes them extremely efficient ambush predators.”

Caruso is one of two biologists in the world who have focused their research on anglerfishes. The other is Theodore Pietsch of the University of Washington, who with his co-author Giorgio Carnevale of the University of Torino, bestowed Caruso's name on this newly identified genus of anglerfishes in [The Journal of Systematic Palaeontology](#).

They wrote: “We are pleased to name this genus in honor of John H. Caruso of Tulane University for his years of service to the world ichthyological community and for his many publications on anglerfish systematics.”

The *Caruso* anglerfishes were identified during study of fossils discovered at Monte Bolca in the Italian Alps, a site known for high-quality fossils in limestone formed

from sediments on the ocean floor during the Eocene, from 56â€“34 million years ago.