

Best of Last Week—giant predator worms, new type of transistor, complex sentences make brain work harder

January 8 2024, by Bob Yirka

Digital 3D model of *T. koprii* gen. et sp. nov. Reconstruction showing internal and external anatomy (red, musculature; blue, ventral ganglion; black, jaw apparatus; green, gut). (A) Lateral view. (B) Dorsal view. (C) Ventral view. (D) Ventral view excluding musculature. Credit: *Science Advances* (2024). DOI: [10.1126/sciadv.adi6678](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adi6678)

It was a good week to start off the new year as an international team of natural and Earth scientists found evidence of [giant predator worms](#) that lived more than a half-billion years ago in North Greenland—fossils proving their existence were found in the Early Cambrian Sirius Passet locality. Also, a trio of life scientists at the University of Nottingham, in the U.K., found evidence that [evolution is not as unpredictable](#) as thought. Using a machine-learning approach on the genome of a bacterial species, Alan Beavan, Maria Rosa Domingo-Sananes, and James McInerney found that some of its evolutionary process could be predicted. And a research team made up of evolutionary biologists from the University of Maine, Colby College and the Institute of Evolution, Center for Ecological Research found evidence that suggested [evolution might stop humans from solving climate change](#). Timothy Waring, Zachary Wood and Eörs Szathmáry found that characteristic processes of innate human evolution may obstruct its global solutions abilities.

In technology news, a team of engineers at the Georgia Institute of Technology designed and built the first functional [semiconductor made from graphene](#). And team of computer scientists led by the University of Massachusetts Amherst developed an AI-driven machine-checking [method for verifying software code](#) that will hopefully lead to fewer bugs. Also, another team of engineers from Hunan University, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Wuhan University developed [a new kind of transistor](#) based on monolayer black phosphorus and germanium arsenide. And a team of engineers affiliated with several institutions in South Korea demonstrated a butterfly-inspired design for the creation of [crumple-recoverable electronics](#).

In other news, a large international team of doctors and medical researchers found evidence that people who stop consuming alcoholic beverages can [reduce their risk](#) of developing some types of cancers. Also, a team of engineers and atmospheric scientists at Harvard University, working with a colleague from the California Institute of

Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, found that increases in rice farming in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa has led to [rising amounts of methane emissions](#) into the atmosphere. And finally, a team of cognitive scientists at MIT, working with a colleague from the University of Minnesota, found evidence that complex, unfamiliar sentences [make the human brain's language network work harder](#).

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