



Monster Blast from the Past

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Check out some of the scariest prehistoric animals!



From sharp teeth to slashing claws, many prehistoric animals were almost like real-life monsters. Read on to meet some extinct monsters from the past.

Killer Croc

With their powerful jaws and sharp teeth, today's crocodiles are top predators. But that's nothing compared to their ancient ancestors. Meet *Sarcosuchus imperator*, one of the largest crocodile relatives to ever exist. At 40 feet (12.2 m) long, *Sarcosuchus* was about the length of a large school bus. That's also as long as a *Tyrannosaurus rex*!

Sarcosuchus was an ancient reptile that lived some 110 million years ago. It was related to today's crocodiles and alligators. Like all reptiles, *Sarcosuchus* had scales and was cold-blooded. This meant that it had to rely on its surroundings to stay warm. *Sarcosuchus* lived in parts of Africa, where it probably stayed along the banks of rivers. There, it might have lurked underwater before snatching prey. It was big enough to dine on dinosaurs!

Mega Shark

Today, some of the largest, most powerful sharks around are great white sharks. They can reach up to 20 feet (6.1 m) in length. That's more than three times the length of the average adult human. But 20



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Artist rendering of a Megalodon.

million years ago, a shark much bigger existed. In fact, it was so big it probably could have swallowed a great white shark whole! Meet *Carcharocles megalodon*, also known as the megalodon. Stretching up to 60 feet (18.2 m) long, a megalodon would have been about 1.5 times longer than a large school bus.

Scientists know how big megalodons might have been because they have found fossils of megalodon jaws. By studying these fossils, experts learned that a megalodon's bite would have been strong enough to crush a car. This giant shark also could have swallowed two adult humans standing side by side! Don't worry, though: they went extinct around 2.5 million years ago.

DID YOU KNOW?

The largest living shark today is about as big as a megalodon would have been. However, whale sharks are gentle giants who feed on tiny fish.

Super Snake

Millions of years ago, giant animals ruled the planet. Some, like *Sarcosuchus*, crawled. Others, like the megalodon, swam. And some slithered! Next up, meet *Titanoboa cerrejonensis*, one of the largest snakes ever to live. Today, green anacondas are some of the biggest snakes around. They can grow up to 30 feet (9.1 m) long. Stretched out, that's about the height of a three-story building. They can also weigh up to 550 pounds (249.5 kg), or as much as an adult male tiger.



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Green Anaconda.

So, how big was Titanoboa? At 45 feet (13.7 m), Titanoboa could grow about the length of a large school bus and weigh as much as a small car. Scientists think this supersized snake probably hunted like anacondas do. Titanoboa might have waited underwater near the shores of rivers. Then, it would have lunged out to grab prey and used its strong body to squeeze its meal to death. Then, it would have swallowed it whole!

FUN FACT

Thanks to its flexible jaws, a snake can swallow an animal larger than its head.