

PAPER WORLD

DINOSAURS

Take a
closer look
at Dinosaurs –
with 40 flaps
to lift!



illustrated by
GAIL ARMSTRONG

DINOSAURS

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books

CONTENTS

Before the Dinosaurs
Triassic: Rise of the Dinosaurs
Triassic Oceans
Jurassic
Jurassic Giants

Jurassic Skies
Cretaceous Variety
End of the Dinosaurs
Fossils Form
Finding Fossils
Glossary

Dinosaurs ruled the earth for around 160 million years, from 230 to 65 million years ago. They came in many shapes and sizes: from four-legged giants, as tall than skyscrapers, to tiny sharp-toothed predators. At the same time, flying reptiles dominated the skies and marine reptiles stalked the oceans....

Turn the pages and lift the flaps to explore the dynamic world of the dinosaurs, revealing layer after layer of incredible facts.



BEFORE THE DINOSAURS:

THE CARBONIFEROUS FOREST

The very first life appeared in the oceans: simple life-forms which evolved over millions of years. Eventually some fish developed limb-like fins and made the move onto land – they were the first amphibians. Their homes were the Carboniferous Forests: hot, swampy regions that stretched across the continents, from 358 million years ago until the Permian Period, 298 million years ago.

Like frogs and toads today, the amphibians of the Carboniferous Period had to keep close to the water, and lay their eggs beneath its surface. But another kind of creature was evolving around this time: the first reptiles. Unlike amphibians, reptiles could venture further from the water as they could lay eggs on land. The climate became hotter and drier, and the forests became more open.

Formation of coal in the carboniferous forests

When plants in the carboniferous forest died, their remains sank, making a dense material called peat. As the peat got squashed and sank deeper and deeper, it heated up until it 'cooked', turning into hard coal.



Eryops

The first amphibians had short limbs, evolved from the fins of fish. Eryops had a long flat skull, and hunted like a crocodile today.

Journey on to land

The first life appeared in the seas at least 3.7 billion years ago. Initially just single-celled, water millions of years later evolved into simple, soft-bodied sea creatures. Gradually, animals with skeletons appeared during the Cambrian period, and fish pulled themselves from the water to prey on insects. They were the first amphibians.

Early reptiles

Hylonomus was one of the earliest reptiles. Around 20cm long, it spent most of its time in trees and probably ate insects.

Giant dragonflies

Meganeuroptera was the biggest insect ever, with a wingspan of up to 75cm, and a fierce predator. It is thought that insects grew so large at this time because of a surplus of oxygen in the air.

Diplocaulus

Diplocaulus had a boomerang-shaped head, which gave it a streamlined shape for swimming, and made it hard for predators to swallow.

Tetrapods

Roughly 380 million years ago, a type of fish with leg-like fins crawled out of the water to find food. It became the first tetrapod – the ancestor of all land vertebrates (animals with backbones).

Giant millipede

Arthropleura was the longest invertebrate ever, reaching lengths of around 2.6m – as long as a car.

Eggs

Like amphibians today, prehistoric amphibians had to go back to the water to lay eggs.

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Formation of coal in the carboniferous forests

When plants in the carboniferous forests died, their remains sank, making a dense material called peat. As the peat got thicker and sank deeper and deeper, it was pushed up with a 'crushed' burning tree hard coal.



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Reptiles on the land
The first life appeared in the seas of about 3.5 billion years ago. Reptiles first appeared on land about 350 million years ago. They were the first animals to live on land.

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Coeloceras

The Coeloceras could glide between trees using wing-like sails supported by long ribs down its sides.

Parasaurus

Parasaurus was an armoured reptile, its skin covered in bony plates called osteoderms. It walked on thick legs, like an elephant, which helped it to its size, much like reptiles today.

Dimetrodon

Dimetrodon was over 3.5m long with a huge tail on its back, held up by spines. Its tail may have helped maintain its body temperature, working like a solar panel to soak up sun.

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PERMIAN PERIOD

By the Permian Period, conditions had become hotter and drier, and reptiles fared better than amphibians. Then, around 251.9 million years ago, volcanic activity wiped out more than 90 percent of species in the oceans, and 70 per cent of species on land. It was the most extreme extinction event ever in Earth's history and the end of the Permian.

Gorgonops

Gorgonops was a sabre-toothed Permian reptile and one of the top predators of its day.

Archosaurs

This animal family includes dinosaurs, marine reptiles, pterosaurs, birds and modern crocodiles.

Archeria

Like a crocodile today, Archeria could walk on land or swim in the water.

Coelurosaurus

This little reptile could glide between trees using wing-like sails supported by bony rods down its sides.

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Diadectes

Most early animals couldn't breathe and see at the same time. The first exception to this was Diadectes! This ability enabled it to grow up to 3m long – making it the first large animal to live only on land.

Coelurosaurus

This little reptile could glide between trees using wing-like sails supported by bony rods down its sides.

Mussaurus

This plant-eater was one of the ancestors of the huge sauropods that evolved in later years. It reached lengths of up to 8m – about as long as a bus!



By the end of the Triassic, the continents had begun to drift apart in two supercontinents: Laurasia in the north and Gondwana in the south.



Permian
225 million years ago

Placerias

This hippopotamus-like plant-eater belonged to a family called 'dicynodonts', meaning 'two dog tooth' – thanks to their two tusks.



Herrerasaurus

This fearsome predator reached lengths of 3m, with sharp claws for grabbing its prey.



Coelophysis

This slender dinosaur grew to around 3m long, and was one of the earliest dinosaurs. It preyed on small reptiles and amphibians.



lizard-hipped (ichian), depending on the shape of their pubic bones pointed.



Parasuchus

Crocodile-like Parasuchus ate fish and grew to around 2m long.



Nyasaurus

Nyasaurus fossils have been discovered in rocks 243 million years old, making it the earliest known dinosaur.



Saurosuchus

This 5-metre-long hunter was a non-dinosaur reptile that lived alongside dinosaurs. Tooth marks in fossils suggest it ate small dinosaurs.



Eudimorphodon

Pterosaurs were a family of winged reptiles – but not dinosaurs. Eudimorphodon was one of the first pterosaurs. It had more than 100 teeth – perfect for grabbing fish from the water.



Eoraptor

This fox-sized dinosaur ran on two legs and only reached lengths of around 1m.



Early mammals

The first true mammals were rodent-like animals, such as the one-metre-long Eozostrodon.



TRIASSIC

The Triassic Period (252–201 million years ago) began after the worst extinction event in Earth's history. Almost 90 per cent of species were wiped out, but as Earth slowly recovered, plant and animal life boomed. Reptiles became increasingly diverse. Then, around 240 million years ago, the first dinosaurs evolved. Quick, two-legged reptiles, these early dinosaurs were tiny compared to the giants that followed in their footsteps, and fed on a mixture of plants and meat.

Over the course of the Triassic, dinosaurs and their relatives grew in number and became more and more diverse – varying wildly in size, diet and lifestyle. By the end of the period, they and their relatives were increasingly dominant: dinosaurs roamed the land, pterosaurs soared the skies and huge marine reptiles swam in the oceans.

TRIASSIC SEA

While dinosaurs roamed the earth, the oceans were teeming with life, too. Colourful corals stretched along the warm, shallow coastlines of Pangea. Like today's corals, they were the perfect home for thousands of species: from microscopic algae to enormous marine reptiles bigger than a blue whale.

Marine reptiles were only distantly related to dinosaurs. They could reach enormous sizes, because their body weight was supported by the water – just like whales today. The Triassic saw more diversity of marine reptiles than any other point in history. They came in many shapes and sizes, from dolphin-like ichthyosaurs to turtle-like *Hedonius*. They moved in different ways, too: plesiosaurs and sea turtles used their limbs like paddles; while other groups used their tail and long snake-like body to move. All were predators, feeding on fish, squid, shelled invertebrates and each other!

Helicoprion

This shark-like fish had a spiral-shaped jaw, containing more than 100 teeth. It probably fed on squid and ammonites.



Atopodentatus

This hammer-headed herbivore lived like marine iguanas today, scraping algae off the sea floor to eat.



Cyamodus

This small placodont had two separate shells and a long tail. It would have dived to the seafloor to feed then swum to the surface for air.



Temnodontosaurus

This ichthyosaur had a dolphin-like body and long, toothed beak. Reaching lengths of around 10m, it had huge eyes to help it find prey in dark water.



Shonisaurus

This huge ichthyosaur may have been the largest animal ever alive. As long as a bowling lane, it grew up to 21m long.

Its skull alone was around 2.75m long – that's longer than the height of an adult human.

Hedonius

This metre-long reptile looked like a turtle with its wide, flat shell. It would have crushed shellfish with its beaklike mouth.



Nothosaurus

This marine reptile had a long, flexible neck, webbed feet and sharp teeth. It may have spent some of its time on shore, like a seal today.


First corals

During the mid-Triassic, corals became wide-spread. Like modern coral reefs, they were made colourful by the algae living within them.





Anchiornis
This feathered theropod was one of the smallest dinosaurs. Its remains have been preserved in amazing detail meaning scientists can tell what colour its feathers were. It's one of the first dinosaurs that may have been able to use its wings to fly.



high neck like a giraffe, which enabled it to browse leaves from the highest treetops. It was one of the largest dinosaurs ever.

JURASSIC

The Jurassic Period (201–145 million years ago) was a time of huge change for the planet and its inhabitants. The super-continent Pangea continued to split apart, and new oceans rushed to fill the spaces between, creating wide, shallow seas, dotted by tropical islands. On the continents, mountains burst up, separated by wide forests of conifers, ferns and cycads. The climate was hot and tropical. And in the oceans, fish and the land, many new species evolved – filling the gaps left behind by a huge extinction event at the end of the Triassic.

On land, dinosaurs were dominant, and began to diversify in appearance and lifestyle. With so much plant-life to eat, herbivores reached enormous sizes: the first sauropods evolved, growing to mighty lengths. In response, predators grew larger, too. Alongside these fierce hunters, smaller feathered dinosaurs roamed the forests – these went on to become the ancestors of the birds.




Coelurus

This smaller meat-eater grew to around 2m long and would have been about hip-height to an adult human.



Mammals

The mouse-sized creature *Megascrotodon* was one of the first mammals. It had a small, shrew-like body. Mammals are warm-blooded animals with fur, whose young drink milk.



Camptosaurus

This large herbivore grew up to 6m long. Its hand could have grabbed plants as it ate and it had a beak-like mouth for snipping leaves.

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Brachiosaurus
Brachiosaurus had a high neck like a giraffe, which enabled it to browse leaves from the highest treetops. It was one of the largest dinosaurs ever.

Diplodocus
Diplodocus was one of the many huge sauropods that emerged during the Jurassic. With its long neck and whip-like tail, it reached lengths of around 27m. It would have eaten low-lying plants, or could have reared up on two legs to eat from the tree tops.

Archaeopteryx
This feathered dinosaur is widely regarded as the oldest known bird, living around 150 million years ago.

Ceratosaurus
This fierce predator had a distinctive horn on its nose, and sharp, blade-like teeth.

Allosaurus
One of the most common hunters in the Jurassic, Allosaurus was a quick and ferocious predator, preying on plant-eaters such as Stegosaurus.

Stegosaurus was about the same size as a rhinoceros. It had fierce tail spikes for fighting enemies and two rows of bony plates down its back. These may have changed colour to signal to other members of the herd, or to help it regulate its temperature.

Camptosaurus
This large herbivore grew up to 6m long. Its hand could have grabbed plants as it ate and it had a beak-like mouth for stripping leaves.

JURASSIC SKIES

The skies of the Jurassic Period were not populated by birds, but by huge flying reptiles with tooth-lined beaks! They were the pterosaurs. These reptiles were not dinosaurs, but were part of the same wider family known as the archosaurs, to which all dinosaurs, pterosaurs and crocodiles belong. They first appeared in the Late Triassic, and ruled the skies for more than 160 million years until the end of the Cretaceous.

Pterosaurs had wings made of skin and muscle, stretched from their long fourth finger to their body. Hollow bones reduced their weight, so they were light enough to fly, despite their huge size. And many had tails, which would have been used like a rudder on an aeroplane to help them steer in mid-air. On land, pterosaurs could have folded their wings and walked on their forelimbs like legs. Like many birds today, they probably roosted on cliff edges or trees, and could have used the height to help them take off.

Like modern birds today, pterosaurs have roosted on cliff edges. This close to the food helped them fly.

Eggs

Like dinosaurs, pterosaurs' young hatched from eggs.

Pterodactylus

This pterosaur is thought to have fed on smaller land animals, crushing them with its powerful beak.

Dimorphodon

This small-sized pterosaur may have been an insect-eater. Its relatively short wings mean it probably only flew short distances.

Anurognathus

This tiny pterosaur had a wingspan of just 35cm – and weighed just 40g. That's about the same weight as a chocolate bar!

Feathers

Many dinosaurs had basic proto-feathers on their bodies – not like the scaly reptiles we know today!

Rhamphorhynchus

This pterosaur used its needle-like teeth to catch fish as it flew over rivers and lakes.

Flying insects

Dragonflies and other insects also buzzed in the Jurassic skies.

Pteractyl

Avian

Bat

Humerus
Radial/Ulna
Metacarpals
Fingers

Ornithomimus

This ostrich-like meat-eater had a long, slender neck and ran quickly on two long legs.

Duck-billed dinosaurs

Hadrosaurs, or duck-billed dinosaurs, were known as the cows of the Cretaceous. This is because they grazed in huge herds across the Cretaceous plains. They are also known as duck-billed dinosaurs because of their beak-like mouth shape.

Pachycephalosaur

This 4-metre-long dinosaur may have used its thick-domed skull to fight other males – like deer do today. The top of its skull was up to 25cm thick!

Tyrannosaurus rex

One of the largest land predators ever, T.rex grew over 12 metres long and had huge sharp teeth the size of bananas. Its name means 'king of the lizards'.

Ankylosaurus

This eight-metre-long dinosaur had a broad, tank-like body armoured with bony plates. Even its eyelids were armoured! Its tail acted like a club, which it could swing from side to side at attackers.

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dinosaurs,
had a long

Styracosaurus

With four to six long spikes sticking out of its neck frill and a huge horn on the front of its nose, this dinosaur, whose name means 'spiked lizard' had a formidable appearance. Its huge neck frill may have helped it to attract a mate.

Triceratops

This huge ceratopsian (horned dinosaur) was the size of an African elephant, with three horns on its face, the longest nearly one metre long. It had a large frill at the back of its skull to defend its vulnerable neck from attack, and a beak-like mouth for eating plants.

Nests

Maiaasaura lived in herds to rear their young, like many animals today. The nests were scooped out of the ground and held as many as 40 eggs.

Deinonychus

This smaller predator grew up to 3.5 metres long. Its name means 'terrible claw' referring to the sickle-shaped claw on each rear foot which it held up as it ran to keep it sharp.

1978
evidence that
their young

CRETACEOUS PERIOD

The Cretaceous Period lasted from 145–66 million years ago. These were the final years of the dinosaurs, before a huge extinction event wiped them out and drew a close to the Age of the Dinosaur. By the Cretaceous, dinosaurs were bigger, faster and fiercer than ever before. They were also more diverse in appearance and lifestyle. Alongside ferocious meat-eaters such as Tyrannosaurus rex, lived enormous sauropods, and huge ranging herds of plant-eaters, which had amazing appearances and defensive features. These included armoured dinosaurs such as the ankylosaurs; horned ceratopsians such as Triceratops and duck-billed dinosaurs such as Parasaurolophus.

Not only were dinosaurs more diverse, but the creatures around them were, too. These included the ancestors of modern-mammals, as well as many varieties of reptiles, insects, trees and even the first flowers. Constant volcanic eruptions made the environment much warmer than it is today. Even the north and south poles were free from ice and covered in forests! Because of this, ocean levels were about 200 metres higher than they are now.

CRETACEOUS GIANTS

Sauropods were large, long-necked plant-eaters that first emerged in the Jurassic. They walked on four pillar-like legs to support their enormous weight, and spent all day grazing on leaves, ferns and horsetails, in order to take in enough nutrients. However, their long necks enabled them to reach even the highest trees, like giraffes today, so they could reach shoots and leaves inaccessible to smaller animals.

By the Cretaceous, some well-known species, such as Diplodocus had died out. But in their wake came the largest sauropods ever: the titanosaurs. Named after the mythological Titans of Ancient Greece, they grew to lengths of up to 30 metres: longer than three buses. They were the last great group of sauropods before the dinosaurs all went extinct.

Saltasaurus

This huge dinosaur was covered in bony osteoderms to defend it from predators.

Amargasaurus

This was a comparatively small sauropod, reaching lengths of just 13m. It had two rows of spines down its neck and back, which could have been used for display or defence.

Sauropod teeth

Most sauropods had pencil-shaped teeth, which scraped leaves or pine needles of trees but were little use for chewing.

Dreadnoughtus

This 26m long giant was only discovered in 2005, from fossil remains in Patagonia, Argentina. It stood about as tall as a two-storey building.

Abelisaurus

Few predators could have taken on the sheer size of a sauropod as prey, but one of those that could was Abelisaurus, a 7.5-metre-long hunter from what is now South America.

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Patagotitan

Possibly the largest land animal ever, scientists estimate Patagotitan may have reached lengths of over 30m.

What's in a name?

The huge Dreadnoughtus was named after the mighty Dreadnought battleships of the earliest 20th century. The name means 'fears nothing' in Latin.

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Asteroid

Asteroids are rocky bodies that orbit (circle) the Sun. They range from hundreds of metres across to many kilometres wide.

K-T extinction

The extinction is formally known as the Cretaceous-Tertiary, or K-T extinction. K is short for the German word for Cretaceous and Tertiary is the name for the period of time covering the Paleogene and Neogene periods, which came after the Cretaceous.

Velociraptor

This meat-eater was one of the last dinosaurs to walk Cretaceous Asia. It grew to around 2m in length and had a sickle-shaped claw on its rear foot which it could have used to slash open prey.

This constant eruption would have released huge amounts of toxic gases, including the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, which would have caused the climate to heat up. Or it may be that an asteroid and eruptions both contributed to the extinction.

END OF THE DINOSAURS

Around 66 million years ago, a meteorite as big as a mountain hurtled through space and slammed into Earth. Its impact created giant waves that raced across the oceans, flooding the lands. But more significantly, it threw great clouds of choking dust into the atmosphere, blocking the Sun's light for months or years to come. With no sunlight, all plants on land and in the oceans died out, starting a catastrophic chain of events, as herbivores and finally carnivores ran out of food to eat.

Almost 75 per cent of life died, including all dinosaurs, pterosaurs and marine reptiles such as plesiosaurs. However, some smaller animals, including mammals, birds and fish, survived. This huge extinction marked the end of the Mesozoic Era – the end of the age of the dinosaurs – and the start of the Cenozoic and the rise of mammals.

Microaptor

At no bigger than 80cm, this tiny meat-eater had four small wings.



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Archosaurs

All dinosaurs and pterosaurs died out during the K-T extinction but some archosaurs survived, including the ancestors of crocodiles and birds.

Plants

Plants survived better than animals in the wake of the event, as their seeds and pollen could endure harsh conditions for longer, even if their leaves died.

Palaeogene

The period after the K-T extinction was called the Palaeogene. Mammals, who had previously lived in the shadow of the dinosaurs, multiplied, diversified and thrived in this period.

Mammals

Many of the surviving animals, such as *Alphadon* and *Repenomomys*, were mammals – small animals covered in fur, who gave birth to live young. It helped that mammals at the time were small, especially compared to dinosaurs, and could eat anything, which helped them to survive.

A fossil is made

Here we can see the long process of a fossil forming over millions of years and eventually being discovered.

1. A dinosaur dies

For an animal to turn to a fossil after death, it needs to be buried in sediment (mud or silt). Many land dinosaurs are known from marine sediments as their bodies were washed down rivers and into the sea.

2. The body decays

The soft body parts, such as muscles and skin, rot away. The hard parts, such as bones, teeth and claws, are left.

3. Sediment builds up

Over time, layers of sediment build up. The pressure bearing down turns the lower layers to rock.

Permineralisation

Pores in the buried bones are filled with minerals that filter down through the ground in rainwater. Sometimes, these minerals replace the bone altogether. This is how most fossil bones form.

Pores in the bone fill with minerals from seeped rainwater.

4. Turned to stone

Most or all of the bone has been replaced by preserving minerals such as silica and calcium carbonate. A fossil has formed.

Coprolites

Fossilised dinosaur faeces (poo) can reveal what dinosaurs ate.

5. Changing landscape

Mountains rise up, oceans flood the land, and eventually the dinosaur remains are nearer the surface again.

6. A fossil is discovered

Eventually, the process of erosion wears away the rock to reveal the fossil. Once it is sighted, a team of experts may come in to help uncover all of it.

HOW FOSSILS FORM

Fossils form when an animal's body is preserved after death. Most animals' bodies decompose – but if they are quickly buried in silt or mud, hard parts like bones and teeth can be preserved and eventually turn into stone.

Fossilisation takes millions of years. Groundwater seeps into the bones and the minerals harden to fill the spaces left by the dead cells. Over time, these turn into rock. When we find them, we can learn all about the creatures that walked the Earth before us just by digging them up. In fact, the word fossil comes from the Latin *fossilis* meaning 'dug up'. There are many other types of fossils too – from fossil footprints to fossilised poo!

Trace fossils

A trace fossil is a fossil of a footprint, trail, burrow or other evidence of animal behaviour and movement. For instance, fossil footprints can tell us lots about how dinosaurs lived – whether they lived in herds, whether they walked slowly or ran quickly, and we can even use them to estimate a dinosaur's approximate weight!

Dragons

Hundreds of years ago, before modern science, people discovered fossils and thought they were the bones of dragons or giants.

When Mary was 12, in 1811, she found a complete ichthyosaur fossil on the Jurassic Coast, on England's south coast. It was one of the very first fossils to be studied by scientists. Mary Anning went on to become one of the most prolific and admired fossil finders of her age.

Early fossil hunters

Around 200 years ago, it was popular for tourists visiting seaside locations to buy fossils as souvenirs. Mary Anning's family sold fossils this way in Lyme Regis, England.

Bone Wars

In the eighteenth century, two Americans, Edward Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh, began competing to find dinosaur bones in North America. In 1860, just in types of dinosaur were known. By 1892, this fierce competition had led to the discovery of 170 new dinosaurs.

Where to find fossils

Anybody can find fossils – even children! But if you do find one, be sure to contact an expert and don't try to dig it up. Most fossils are found by the coast, and the most commonly found fossils are ancient sea creatures such as ammonites and trilobites.

Digging up fossils

A dig or excavation is the site where a fossil is found. Palaeontologists work carefully to reveal fossils using hammers, picks, files, scrapers and brushes. Small fossils can be removed easily from the rock. Large fossils are covered for protection and dug out in a large block, which is taken back to a laboratory for further excavation.

DISCOVERING FOSSILS

The only way we know about dinosaurs is from their fossils. Earth's crust is always moving – so eventually a fossil that was on the seabed can rise to be at the top of a mountain. Together with the erosive power of water and wind, this means that in time, fossils will come to our attention and we can unearth and study them.

Scientists who study fossils are called palaeontologists. It can take months of careful work to reveal a fossil in its location. Details about its location, size, and even colour, can help scientists piece together details about a dinosaur's life. After it has been removed from the site, the fossil will be further studied in a laboratory under a microscope before being removed to be placed in storage – or, in some cases, displayed in museums!

Dragons

Hundreds of years ago, before modern science, people discovered fossils and thought they were the bones of dragons or giants.

When Mary was 12, in 1811, she found a complete ichthyosaur fossil on the Jurassic Coast, on England's south coast. It was one of the very first fossils to be studied by scientists. Mary Anning went on to become one of the most prolific and admired fossil finders of her age.

Early fossil hunters

Around 200 years ago, it was popular for tourists visiting seaside locations to buy fossils as souvenirs. Mary Anning's family sold fossils this way in Lyme Regis, England.



Uncovering fossils

Excavation is the site where fossils are uncovered. Palaeontologists work to reveal fossils using hammers, chisels and brushes. Small fossils are removed easily from the rock. Larger fossils are covered for protection and then removed as a large block, which is taken back to a laboratory for further excavation.

UNCOVERING FOSSILS

Most of our knowledge about dinosaurs is from their fossils. Earth's crust is always changing. A fossil that was on the seabed can rise to be at the top of the land. With the erosive power of water and wind, this means that fossils come to our attention and we can unearth and study them.

Fossil hunters are called palaeontologists. It can take months to unearth a fossil in its location. Details about its location, and how it was found, can help scientists piece together details about a fossil. Once it has been removed from the site, the fossil will be taken to a laboratory under a microscope before being stored in storage - or, in some cases, displayed in a museum.

GLOSSARY

Amphibians

The group of cold-blooded vertebrates that have soft bodies and live their lives both in water and on land.

Cambrian Period

From 541 to 485 million years ago. This period saw a huge explosion of marine life, including the first animals with backbones, molluscs and trilobites.

Carboniferous Period

From 358 to 299 million years ago. During this period Earth was covered with plants. Animals spread on land and grew in size, including super-sized insects.

Cretaceous Period

From 145 to 66 million years ago. The last period of the Mesozoic Era, which ended with a mass extinction event that wiped out the dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs

Lizard-like reptiles that dominated the planet during the Cretaceous, Triassic and Jurassic periods.

Evolution

The process of how living things gradually change over time because of characteristics passed down to them from earlier generations.

Extinction

When living things die out and are gone forever.

Fossil

The preserved remains of a prehistoric animal or plant in rock. It's not just remains – evidence such as footprints can be preserved too.

Ichthyosaur

A type of marine reptile that lived during the Mesozoic Era, when the dinosaurs roamed the Earth.

Jurassic Period

From 201 to 145 million years ago. Dinosaurs dominated the land during the Jurassic, and ocean and flying animals flourished too.

Mammals

This large group of animals includes humans. Mammals breathe air, have a backbone and hair, and feed their babies with milk.

Mesozoic Era

This huge division of time includes the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.

Meteorite

A space rock that has fallen to Earth.

Palaeontologist

A scientist who studies life that lived millions of years ago by looking at fossilised remains.

Pangaea

Around 300 million years ago, all the Earth's continents were joined together in one huge landmass called Pangaea.

Permian Period

From 299 to 252 million years ago. The climate warmed and many new animals evolved on land and in the oceans. It ended with the greatest extinction of all time, 'the Great Dying', when most species on Earth suddenly became extinct.

Pterosaur

An extinct flying reptile that lived at the same time as the dinosaurs. Pterosaurs were the first vertebrates to fly, long before birds and bats.

Reptiles

Cold-blooded vertebrates that are covered in scaly skin or bony plates. Dinosaurs were reptiles.

Sauropods

Huge, long-necked, long-tailed, four-legged dinosaurs. Sauropods are the largest animals that have ever walked on land.

Triassic Period

From 252 to 201 million years ago. Reptiles diversified and the first dinosaurs appeared.

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