

Ancient SuperCroc Had Cousins

Dinosaurs weren't the only frightening creatures that lived millions of years ago. In recent years, scientists have found bones of a handful of ancient crocodiles. The skeleton of one croc, nicknamed SuperCroc, was found 10 years ago. SuperCroc, which lived in wetland areas of modern-day Africa, grew to be 40 feet long and 8 tons in weight.



Today, the area where SuperCroc lived is desert land. And it turns out that SuperCroc had cousins! In recent years, scientists have found the bones of five more crocodile species in the African desert. Some of the newly discovered crocs roamed the land low to the ground, like modern crocs do. Others stood upright and walked on their legs like modern mammals. Some of the ancient crocs were both good swimmers *and* good runners. That was a combination that spelled trouble for dinosaurs that got in their way.

These are the five recently discovered crocodiles:

- **BoarCroc** grew to be 20 feet long and had three rows of fangs. It stood upright and ran fast. It used its fangs to slice up its dinosaur prey.
- **RatCroc** was about 3 feet long and ate plants and grubs. It stood upright and used buckteeth in its lower jaw to dig for food.
- **PancakeCroc** was the largest of the new finds, but it was not as large as SuperCroc. PancakeCroc could take down dinosaurs three times its size. It kept its flat head low to the ground, waiting for its next fish or dinosaur meal.
- **DogCroc** was another upright croc. It was dog-size with a doglike nose, and it ate mostly plants and grubs. It could run too, but scientists say it likely used its speed to run *from* larger dinosaurs.
- **DuckCroc** was about 3 feet long and used its long, narrow snout to search shallow waters for its dinner of fish or frogs.

NEWS WORDS

ancient cousin
combination grubs
advantage caiman

"We were surprised to find so many species from the same time in the same place," one scientist said. "Each of the crocs had different diets and behaviors. It appears the crocodiles divided up the wetlands, each taking advantage of the land in its own way."

TODAY'S CROCS

Modern-day crocodiles first appeared about 80 million years ago. Only 23 species of crocs, alligators, and caimans survive today, and many of them are endangered.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Use the descriptions above to draw how you think one of the new crocs looked.