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# News

## Meet the Dinosaurs

Eleven species of dinosaurs are on display at Dinoroarus at the Saint Louis Zoo. Here are some details and theories about these prehistoric animals.



### ***Tyrannosaurus rex* (tye-RAN-uh-sawr-us rex)**

Size: 17 ft. tall, 50 ft. long

Weight: About 7 tons

Movies often show *T. rex* as the biggest, baddest dude around, and that's understandable. But based on his small arms, theories suggest *T. rex* was more of a scavenger than a real predator. His massive jaws could simply snap up other dinosaurs' roadkill, without having to do the dirty work.

Experts used to believe *T. rex* was the largest carnivore among dinosaurs, but bigger species were recently found, like the descriptively named

*Gigantosaurus*. At eight inches long, a *T. rex* tooth is about the size of a banana – a very sharp, deadly banana. With those little arms, flossing would have been tricky. Obviously, *T. rex* had huge, powerful legs. The towering giant actually had to use his tail to balance himself . . . sort of a “tripodicus.”



### ***Stegosaurus* (STEG-uh-SAW-rus)**

Size: 11 ft. tall, 25 ft. long

Weight: About 2 tons

The unique-looking *Stegosaurus* is a familiar species, thanks to the large, pointed plates on its back. It's also distinctive for having an unusually small head on its 4,000-pound body . . . about the size of an Asian elephant. This herbivore's best defense was probably swinging its tail. Tipped with four long (up to 3') pointed spikes, the tail could inflict serious pain on attackers

who weren't scared off by the plates.



### ***Dilophosaurus* (Di-LOFE-ah-sawr-us)**

Size: 6 ft. tall, 20 ft. long

Weight: About 800 pounds

*Dilophosaurus* was a bipedal theropod -- a meat-eater that walked on two legs. It was distinctive for having an unusual double crest of bone on top of its head. The crests were thin and bony, but not every skeleton has them.

The bold head ornaments were used to attract and impress mates. The *Dilophosaurus* was the dinosaur that spewed paralyzing poison on the bad

guy in “Jurassic Park,” but scientists have no proof that a real *Dilophosaurus* had venom glands. It had strong, flexible forearms and opposable thumbs but its jaws were weak and loose.

Therefore, it was probably a scavenger that ate by ripping meat from carcasses with its powerful, grasping claws.

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**Triceratops (Tri-SARE-uh-tops)**

Size: 30 ft. long, 10 ft. tall

Weight: About 7 tons

This familiar dinosaur is one of the most commonly found species. It is well known for the three big horns on its face and a fan-like plate (or “frill”) of thick bone on its skull. It could undoubtedly do serious damage to any enemy it rammed. *Triceratops* lived at the same time as *T. rex* and many other dangerous predators, but since adult Triceratops fossils are so common, its horns and frill must have offered great protection. It certainly didn’t survive by running away on those stubby legs. It apparently ate thick, tough vegetation, as it had a hard beak like a turtle plus a strong scissor-type jaw and cheek molars. The ability to snap off and chew branches would come in handy if the tender greens had been picked over.



**Apatosaurus (ah-Pat-uh-sawr-us)**

Size: 15 ft. tall at the hip, 75 ft. long

Weight: About 30 tons

This well-known giant is a classic dinosaur profile, evidenced by its famous likeness being reproduced on generations of toys and miniature-golf courses. A big, slow-moving *Apatosaurus* might have looked tempting to hungry predators, but its huge tail was probably a powerful weapon. Like an ostrich and other modern herding animals, it may have had naturally “camouflaged” skin patterns to help avoid predators. Evidently the *Apatosaurus* swallowed large stones to help its digestion. Called gastroliths, these internal food-processors would mash vegetation in its gizzard into a yummy pulp.



**Parasaurolophus (PAR-ah-sawr-OL-off-us)**

Size: 16 ft. tall, 30 ft. long

Weight: About 3 tons

The *Parasaurolophus* is a less-commonly found member of the family of *hadrosaurids*, or “duck-billed” dinosaurs, known for their broad, flat mouths. But the most notable feature is the long, curved crest on top of each animal’s head. It’s believed the *Parasaurolophus* forced nasal air through the hollow crest to create loud, resonant sounds, probably for mating rituals or communicating. Fossilized remains of adults and babies found together suggest that some species lived as family units. The *Parasaurolophus* may have been one of them.



**Suchomimus (sook-oh-MIME-us)**

Size: 13 ft. tall, 39 ft. long

Weight: 3-5 tons

*Suchomimus* is one of the latest major dinosaurs to be discovered and classified, having been found in 1998. With its slender, elongated snout and powerful jaws filled with dozens of teeth, *Suchomimus* was similar to the modern false gharial and was probably a fish-eater that spent a lot of time in water. Although similar to its crocodile relatives, it had many important differences, such as the ability to walk upright. It also had large, powerful hands with lethal hook-like claws. This was not a pleasant creature to mess with.

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***Dimetrodon* (dye-MET-ruh-don)**

Size: 10 ft. long, 4 ft. tall

Weight: About 500 pounds

This distinctive creature may be familiar to fans of prehistoric animals, but it is not a member of any dinosaur family. It was actually a *elycosaur*, a reptile believed to have many mammal-like characteristics, including warm blood. The *Dimetrodons* died off long before any real dinosaurs ever appeared. With its sharp teeth and claws, a likely ability to run fast over short distances, a long tail and similarly shaped body, *Dimetrodon* is very comparable to the modern Komodo dragon. Its other notable feature is obviously the huge dorsal fin on its back, which may have served as a way to absorb heat or to appear larger – and therefore less vulnerable -- to predators. Other theories suggest that the *Dimetrodon* used his unusual backbone shape in mating rituals as a way to attract females. Some ladies just can't pass up a great sail.



***Pachycephalosaur* (pak-ee-SEF-uh-lo-sawr-us)**

Size: about 8 ft. tall and 15 ft. long

Weight: About 2 tons

The thick bone atop *Pachycephalosaur*' head was probably used for fighting. Males would lower their necks and simply turn their own hard heads into battering rams. How long such a fight would last – or at what point the loser literally had a splitting headache – we can only imagine. When competing for a female's attention, two wannabe suitors may have charged each other at high speed to impress their date with a real "head-on collision."



***Coelophysis* (see-low-FY-sis)**

Size: 3 ft. tall, 10 ft. long

Weight: About 100 pounds

The *Coelophysis* is one of the most well-known of all dinosaurs, partly because thousands of its skeletons have been discovered and displayed. It was apparently a vicious predator that would have walked upright and attacked with its long, toothy jaw. Because of its hollow bones, which would have reduced its overall body weight, it was quick and agile – a lean, mean killing machine. To make these predators even more frightening, they evidently hunted in large packs, because dozens of *Coelophysis* skeletons have been found in the same places.



***Omeisaurus* (o-MY-ee-sawr-us)**

Size: 30 ft. tall, 60 ft. long

Weight: About 20 - 30 tons

The *Omeisaurus* is similar to other large plant-eating dinosaurs with big necks and tails. However, the *Omeisaurus* had an exceptionally long neck and relatively small torso – which gave it an easier-to-fill stomach and less skin to keep warm. Its unusually long neck gave it a real advantage when competing for food, because it could reach into taller trees without having to share. It also had small teeth that probably weren't good for heavy chewing, so it needed lots of tender vegetation.

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***Dinoroarus presented by The Boeing Company runs April 18-September 1, 2008 at the Saint Louis Zoo. Admission is \$3.00 for non-members, and \$1.50 for Zoo Friends members. Children under two are free. For more information, visit [www.stlzoo.org](http://www.stlzoo.org).***