

VERTEBRATES

Dinosaurs

230 – 66 MYA – EXTINCT

Dinosaurs evolved from diapsid reptiles and are familiar to most people. They include tyrannosaurus, triceratops, brachiosaurus, ankylosaurus, stegosaurus, muttaburrasaurus, and many many more. All dinosaurs were land-dwelling reptiles with

their legs beneath their body, as opposed to out to the side like crocodiles. It was once thought by many that ichthyosaurs, plesiosaurs, mosasaurs, and pterosaurs were dinosaurs too, but they were in fact different clades and orders of reptiles.

Domain	Eukaryota
Kingdom	Animalia
Phylum	Chordata
Class	Reptilia
Clade	Dinosauria

Fossil Record

Dinosaurs first appear in the fossil record in rocks from the middle to late Triassic, about 230 million years old. Dinosaurs dominated the land vertebrate fauna until the extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous, 66 million years ago. The Mesozoic is often referred to as the 'Age of Dinosaurs'.

Habitat and Lifestyle

The climate during the Mesozoic across most of the Earth was tropical to sub-tropical, and so dinosaurs lived on every continent. Most dinosaurs were herbivores, some were predators, and it is likely some were scavengers. Dinosaurs laid eggs and evidence from fossilised nest sites suggests some dinosaurs protected their young.

Fossilisation

Dinosaur remains have been found on every continent. One important fossil site in Australia is 'Dinosaur Cove', west of Melbourne Victoria, where the remains of a wide range of dinosaurs, including theropods, hypsilophodonts, and ornithomimosaurids have been found.



The skull of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* named 'Maximus'.
Image from Sotheby's.



Small feathered dinosaur *Sinosauropteryx prima*, early Cretaceous (about 120 million years old), northern China.
Image from C Bento, Australian Museum.

Explore the complete series



Explore more resources from this series

DID YOU KNOW

Dinosaurs are not extinct! Birds evolved from theropod dinosaurs, and it is impossible to separate them as a group from theropods.

Recent discoveries have shown that many theropod dinosaurs had feathers and may have even been warm blooded like modern birds.

