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## Prehistoric animals found

Dryptosaurus, a dinosaur from New Jersey. Charles R. Knight The prehistory of the Garden State could also be called The Tale of Two Jerseys: For much of the Paleozoic eras, Mesozoic and Cenozoic, the southern half of New Jersey was completely underwater, while the northern half of the state was home to all sorts of terrestrial creatures, including dinosaurs, prehistoric crocodiles and (closer to the modern era) giant megafauna mammals such as the woolly mammoth. On the following slides, you'll discover the most notable dinosaurs and animals that lived in New Jersey in prehistoric times. (See a list of prehistoric dinosaurs and animals discovered in each U.S. state.) Dryptosaurus, a dinosaur from New Jersey. On Wikipedia Commons you probably weren't aware that the first tyrannosaurus discovered in the United States was Dryptosaurus, and not the much more famous Tyrannosaurus Rex. The remains of Dryptosaurus (torn lizard) were excavated in New Jersey in 1866, by the famous paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope, who later sealed his reputation with more extensive discoveries in the American West. (Dryptosaurus, by the way, originally went by the much more euphoric name *Laelaps*.) Hadrosaurus, a dinosaur from New Jersey. Sergei Krasovskiy The official fossil of upstate New Jersey, Hadrosaurus remains a misunderstood dinosaur, though one that has given its name to a vast family of upper Cretaceous plant-eaters (hadrosaurs, or duck-billed dinosaurs). So far, only one incomplete skeleton of Hadrosaurus has been discovered by American paleontologist Joseph Leidy, near the town of Haddonfield, leading paleontologists in speculating that this dinosaur could be better classified as a species (or specimen) of another hadrosaur genus. Icarosaurus, a prehistoric reptile from New Jersey. Nobu Tamura One of the smallest fossils, and one of the most fascinating fossils discovered in the Garden State is the Icarosaurus - a small sliding reptile, vaguely moth-like, dating from the middle Triassic period. The type specimen of Icarosaurus was discovered in a North Bergen quarry by an enthusiastic teenager, and he spent the next 40 years at the American Museum of Natural History in New York until it was bought by a private collector (who immediately gave it back to the museum for further study). Deinosuchus, a prehistoric crocodile from New Jersey. Wikipedia Commons Considering how many states have discovered its remains, the 30-foot-long, 10-ton Deinosuchus must have been a common sight along the lakes and rivers of the late Cretaceous of North America, where this prehistoric crocodile chopped fish, sharks, marine reptiles, and almost everything that happened to cross its path. Incredibly, given its size, Deinosuchus was not even the largest crocodile ever to live; this honor belongs to the somewhat earlier Sarcosuchus, also known as the Dipurus, a prehistoric fish from New Jersey. Wikipedia Commons has media related to Coelacanth Coelacanth. Fish supposedly extinct who experienced a sudden resurrection when a living specimen was caught off the coast of South Africa in 1938. The fact is, however, that most of the genera of Coelacanths actually became extinct tens of millions of years ago, a good example is Dipurus, hundreds of specimens of which have been found preserved in New Jersey sediments. (Coelacanths, by the way, were a type of lob-fish closely related to the immediate ancestors of the first tetrapods.) Enchodus is a fish in the Cornish family. The Jurassic and Cretaceous fossil beds of Dmitry Bogdanov of New Jersey have given the remains of a variety of prehistoric fish, they run from the ancient patti *Myloplus* to the ancestor of *Ischyodus* rats to three separate species of *Enchodus* (better known as the Saber-dented Herring), not to mention the obscure genus of Coelacanth mentioned in the previous slide. Many of these fish were preyed upon by sharks in southern New Jersey (next slide), when the lower half of the Garden State was submerged underwater. Squaliorax, a prehistoric shark from New Jersey. Wikipedia Commons One typically does not associate the interior of New Jersey with deadly prehistoric sharks, so it is surprising that this state has given so many of these fossilized killers, including specimens of *Galeocerdo*, *Hybodus* and *Squaliorax*. The last member of this group is the only conclusively known *Mesozoic* shark to prey on dinosaurs, as the remains of an unidentified hadrosaur (possibly the Hadrosaurus described on the #2 slide) were discovered in the stomach of a specimen. The American Mastodon, a prehistoric mammal in New Jersey. Heinrich Harder Starting in the mid-19th century, in Greenwell, the remains of American Mastodon have been periodically recovered from several New Jersey municipalities, often in the wake of construction projects. These specimens date from the late Pleistocene era, when mastodons (and, to a lesser extent, their woolly mammoth cousins) trampled the swamps and forests of the Garden State, which was much colder tens of thousands of years ago than it is today! The RMS Titanic: do you measure any of the prehistoric animals on this list? (On Wikipedia Commons there is media related to: On Wikipedia Commons We all know about HMS Titanic, the 900-foot-long, 50,000-ton behemoth that sank on its first trip from England to New York. But millions of years before this disaster of headlines, gigantic birds, reptiles and mammals brought to earth, which modern paleontologists have chosen to honor by including the Titan Greek root in their names. Were all these supposedly Titanic creatures equally well-known? Here is a gallery of ten candidates, rated on our 10-point scale of truly glorious impressiveness. On Wikipedia Commons has multimedia content relating to: Angolatitan One of dozens of *Titanosauroid* dinosaurs that incorporated the word titan into their names (others include Lusotitan, Uberabatitan and Huanghetitan). Angolatitan was a slightly armored, multi-ton sauropod from upper Cretaceous Africa, what what Angolatitan's inclusion on this list is the unusual fact of its fossil type: paleontologists speculate that this unfortunate individual was blashed in shark-infested waters, where he was quickly ripped off, his extra-harsh epidermis nevertheless. Titan rating: 7 out of 10 titanoceratops (Wikimedia Commons). Not the most accepted genus of ceratopsian (bonyrino dinosaur and steering wheel). Titanoceratops, the titanic-c'd bathed face, measured 25 feet from tail to head and weighed five tons, make it one of the largest ceratopsians yet identified. The problem is that some paleontologists believe that titanoceratops were actually an unusually superannuated triceratops individual, just as *seismosaurus* may have been an exceptionally thick, elderly specimen of Diplodocus. Titan rating: 9 out of 10 Aerotitan (Nobu Tamura). Sounds like the new junk airline of a country up and running-Trip to Dubai? Fly Aerotitan --but the titanic air is actually a newly identified genus of pterosaur. What makes Aerotitan important is that it is South America's first identified Pterosaur Azhdarchid, a true giant with a wingspan of 25 feet and an impressive weight of 200 pounds (compared to 50 pounds, max, for today's largest flying birds). The aerotitan may even have been as large as the US Quetzalcoatlus, although hard fossil evidence is missing. Titan rating: 8 out of 10 Titanotylos (Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History). It is a little-known fact that camels once toured the deserts and plains of the Pleistocene of North America, and Titanotylos (giant knife foot) was the largest camel of them all, weighing up to a full ton. (In fact, this megafauna mammal was once known as Gigantocamelus, which seems much more intuitive!) Appropriately, the dinosaur-sized Titanotylos was equipped with a dinosaur-sized brain, which may explain why the entire IQ-challenged race was kaput on the cusp of the modern era. Titan rating: 7 out of 10 tyrannotitan (Wikimedia Commons). The tyranntitan was not technically a titanosaur, this honor belongs to meat eaters like T-Rex and Tarbosaurus, but it was certainly a titan. Discovered in Argentina in 2005, Tyrannotitan's fragmented remains hint at a fearsome 40-foot-long predator from head to tail, which would make it comparable in size to the largest theropod of them all, Spinosaurus. There is some suspicion, however, that Tyrannotitan may have been a superannuated specimen of Allosaurus, in which case the log books should be rewritten in a different way. Titan rating: 9 out of 10 Brontotherium, aka Titanops (Wikimedia Commons). The megafauna mammal so large that they called it not once, but four times, Titanops (which is better known as Brontotherium, and also in Brontops and Megacerops) it was a two-ton perissodactyl (hooved mammal) from the late Eocene era. Like Tylos above, Titanops possessed an unusually small brain because of its size, and looked like it as a skin-covered version of the hadrosaurs (duck-billed dinosaurs) that preceded it for tens of millions of years. Titan rating: 7 out of 10 Titanoboa (Sameer Prehistorica). What do you call a 50-foot-long boa constrictor ancestor? Whatever you want you to do, of course. The largest prehistoric snake ever experienced, Titanoboa terrorized its larger-sized reptiles of the Middle South American Paleocene, including the one-ton tortoise Carbonemys. The allegedly cold-blooded titanoboa was so thick and muscular, towards the center of its trunk, as to lead scientists to the conclusion that Colombia was a much warmer (and much more dangerous) place 60 million years ago than it is today. Titan rating: 10 out of 10 Titanophorus (Wikimedia Commons). The Greek root phon means murderous, not farce, but it's the last definition that comes to mind when talking about Typhon. The fact is that this titanic killer wasn't that big, only about eight feet long and 200 pounds (which, granted, was still quite impressive way back during the Permian period, 250 million years ago, when most creatures still had to evolve to huge sizes). Titanophorus compensated for its lack of bulk with the two huge cannings on the front of its staff, and may (or may not) have been covered in fur. Titanosuchus fails titanically, in two crucial ways. First, this titanic crocodile was not a crocodile at all, but a type of terapsid, or mammalian reptile, from the Permian period. Second, Titanosuchus was only about 6 feet long and 200 pounds, or about the size of a full-grown human. Interestingly, the closest relative of this dark beast was another less than titanic terapsid from southern Africa, *Titanophone*, described above. Conspiracy or carelessness? You make the call. Titan rating: 4 out of 10 Titaniums (Wikimedia Commons). The discoverer of Titanis must have had a lot of confidence in the titanic of this prehistoric bird, well, since he didn't even bother to add another Greek root to his name. As the flightless predatory birds leave, Titaniums was certainly imposing, weighing a few hundred pounds and rising eight feet above the ground, but was still not as large as Pleistocene companions such as Aepyornis or Dinornis. Extra points to be the heavy of James Robert Smith's bestseller The Flock, will soon appear in a theater near you. Titan rating: 8 out of 10

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