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Part 1: THE WORLD OF PREHISTORY

1-A: Unusual Creatures and Environment
1-B: What about Human Beings in the Age of Prehistory?
1-C: Origin of the Prehistoric Environment and Cause of its Disappearance

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Investigating the world of Pre-history is very much like detective work





A pair of Ceratopsian dinosaur fossils (dubbed Ben, a juvenile, and Xenia) provide “clues” to their appearance.

Well known in the domain of science is the fact that our world was a very different place back in some distant prehistoric age. The discoveries of paleontologists, geologists, archeologists have attested over and over again to this intriguing reality about Earth’s history. The climate, surface features, plants and animals, and human beings were all much different to what they are today.

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For example, fossil discoveries have proven that plant and animal life was greatly sized-up compared to what exists today.





Crocodile and Deer Huge Compared to Those of Our Present Environment



Dinosaurs the Size of Double-decker Buses: In fact, Argentinosaurus (below) would have been 3-4 times the length of a Volvo bus



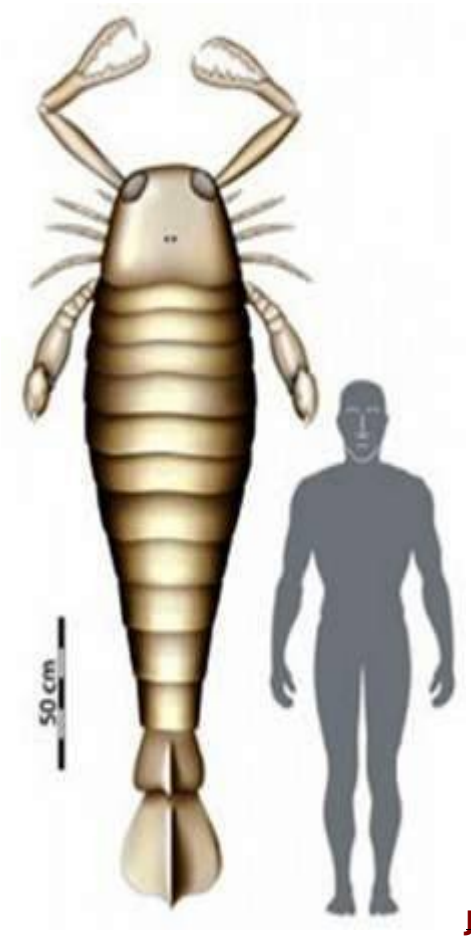
Argentinosaurus

- **Perhaps the biggest of dinosaurs**
- **Gigantic plant-muncher (named after Argentina, where its remains were found)**
- **Measured about 120 feet from head to tail and may have weighed over 100 tons.**
- **Just one vertebra of Argentinosaurus is over four feet thick!**



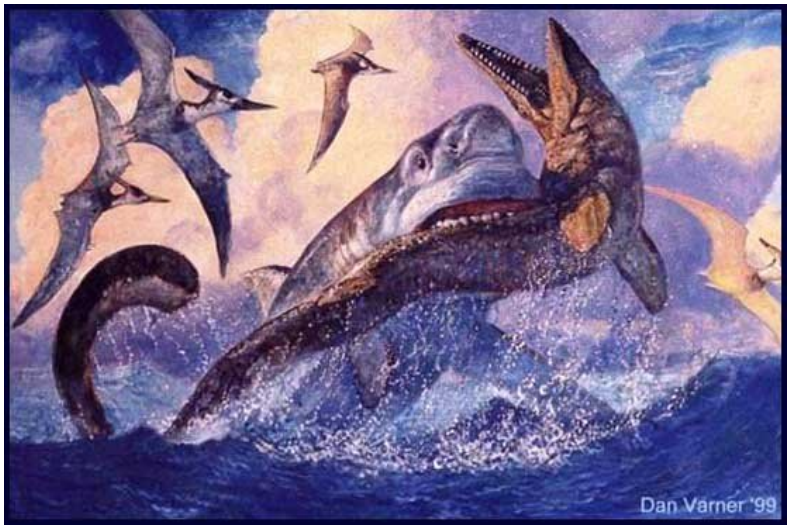
Giant Dragonfly

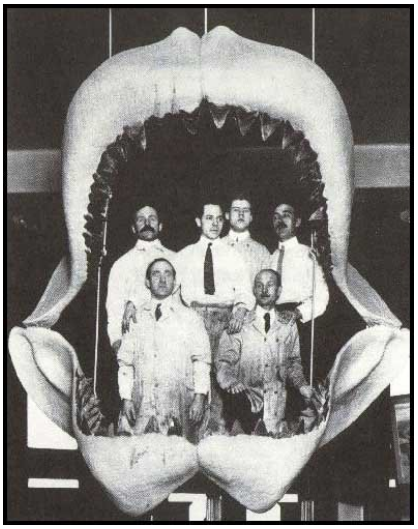
- **Lifesize reconstruction of Meganeuropsis Permiana**
- **Wingspan: 72 cm (28 inches)**



Jaekelopterus

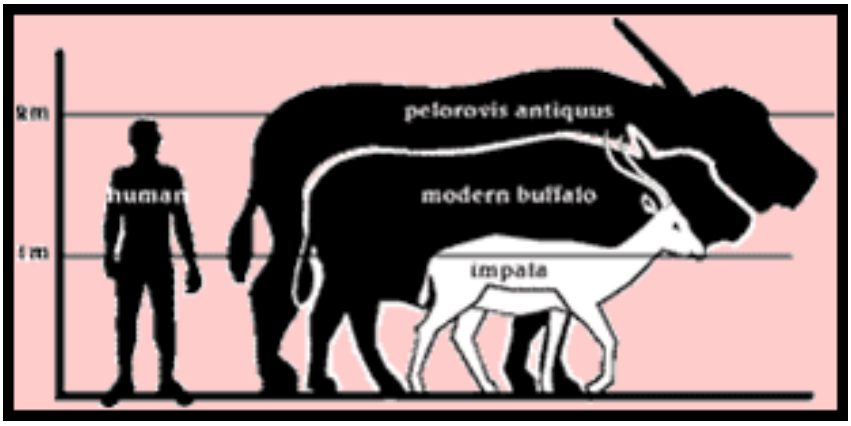
- **One of the largest arthropods (creepy-crawlers) ever discovered**
- **Related to the horseshoe crab, arachnids (spiders), and scorpions**
- **About 8.2 feet long and lived in fresh water lakes and rivers**
- **Sometimes called the sea scorpion**





Megalodon

- **A gigantic shark, closely related to today's mako shark and great white shark**
- **Up to 20 meters long and 60 tons in weight, being almost six times larger than Tyrannosaurus Rex!**



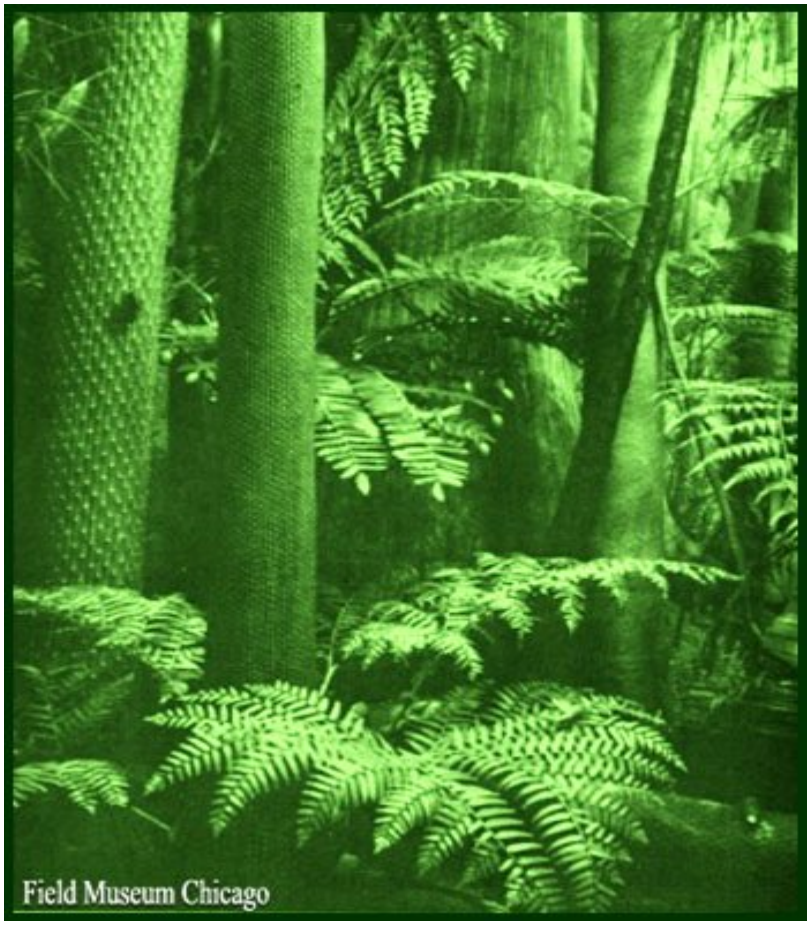


Pelorovis

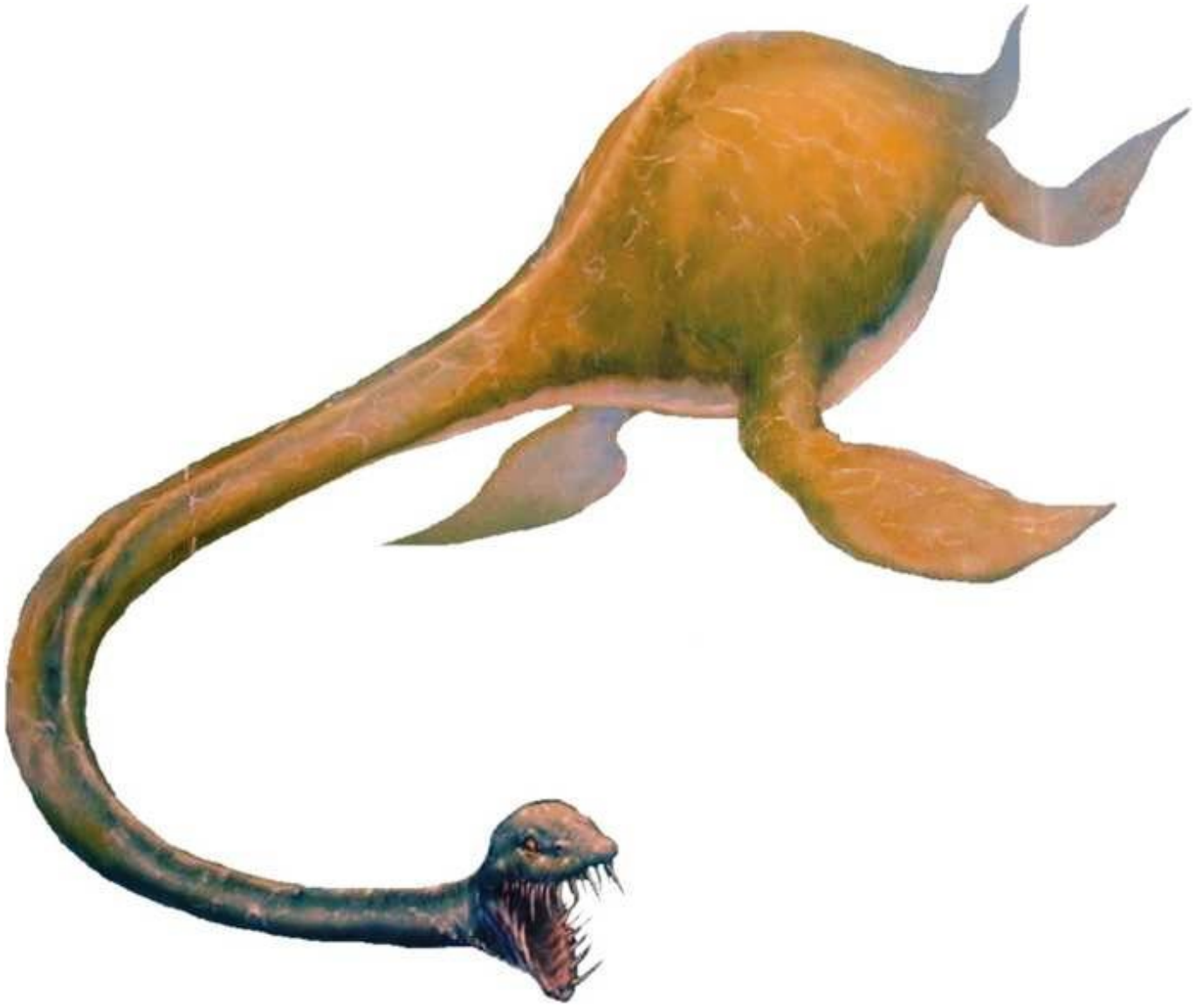
- **The central African prehistoric goat looked like a gigantic bull.**
- **Huge paired horns on top of its massive head (about six feet long from base to tip)**

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As in the Animal Kingdom, the Plant Kingdom too was Much Larger in Size


Field Museum Chicago

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Elasmosaur

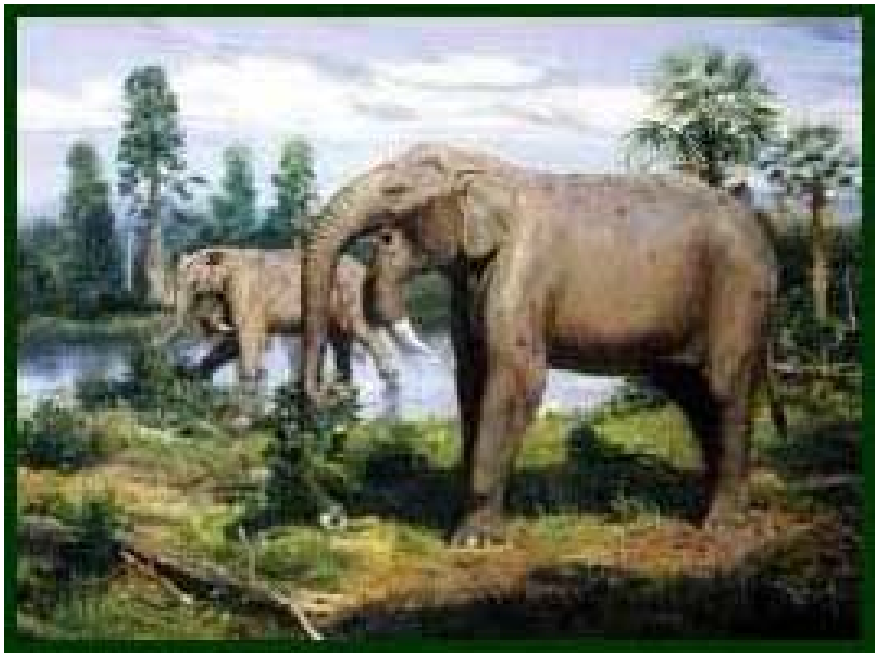
- **A type of plesiosaur**
- **46 feet in length**
- **Weighed over 2.2 tons**
- **Half of its body's length was its neck.**
- **Over 70 vertebrae in the neck, more than any known animal today**
- **The neck was the only part of its body that could lift out of the water.**

- **Despite its large size, its flippers were small.**
- **No close relatives to animals in today's world, except that it bears a close resemblance to accounts made of the Loch Ness monster.**



Indricotherium (or Paraceretherium)

- **An extinct species of gigantic hornless rhinoceros-like mammals**
- **The largest land mammal known, larger than the largest species of mammoths**
- **5.5 metres (18 ft) tall at the shoulder, 12 metres (39 ft) in length with the tail, a maximum raised head height of about 8 metres (26 ft), and a skull length of 1.5 metres (4.9 ft)**
- **Weight approximately 20 (metric) tons. This puts it in the weight range of some medium-sized sauropod dinosaurs.**
- **A herbivore who stripped leaves from trees**



Deinotherium

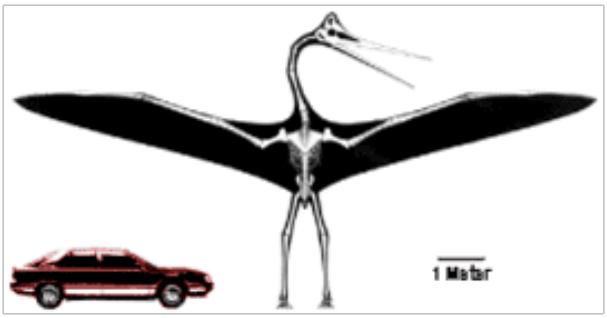
- **Looks much like present-day elephants except for the shorter trunk and the placing of its tusks.**
- **Known as the ‘hoe tusker’. Tusks were attached to the lower jaw, not the upper jaw.**
- **Considered the third largest land mammal to have ever existed (after indricotherium and the mammoth elephant)**
- **About 15 feet tall and weighing over 15.4 tons**
- **Its fossils have been found everywhere, mainly in Europe, Asia, and Africa.**
- **Most likely related to the elephants of today and to the extinct wooly mammoths and mastodons of the past**



Helicoprion

- **Shark-like, having cartilage, fins, and razor sharp teeth.**
- **Known as the “Spiral Saw”**
- **The arrangement of teeth on the lower jaw looks very much like a circular saw.**
- **As new teeth grew, the older teeth were pushed out and into the middle to create the spiral.**
- **About 10-15 feet in length**
- **Little is known about the skeleton, but it is assumed to be cartilaginous, similar to other members of that class of fish – sharks and rays.**

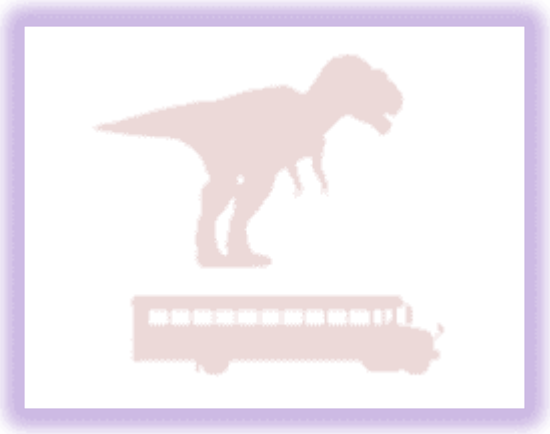




Quetzalcoatlus

- **Perhaps the largest creature to ever roam the skies**
- **Named after an Aztec god, Quetzalcoatl, who was known for being a feathered serpent**
- **Scientific name: *pterodactyloid pterosaur***
- **King of the skies, with a wing span of up to 36 feet and standing almost 32 feet high on the ground**
- **Had a pointed beak, used for collecting food**
- **No teeth**
- **On the ground, the animal was a quadruped, it is believed, using its folded wings as an extra pair of legs.**
- **It could take off straight into flight. But nowadays the air is too thin, and it probably could not fly in our present atmosphere.**
- **No clear relatives today, but it was related to the Pteranodon, also extinct.**
- **It compares somewhat to the Marabou stork of today.**





Tyrannosaurus Rex

- **Its thick, heavy skull and 4-foot-long (1.2-meter-long) jaw, was designed for maximum crushing ability.**
- **About 40 feet (12 meters) long and about 15 to 20 feet (4.6 to 6 meters) tall**
- **Its strong thighs and long, powerful tail helped it move quickly.**
- **Its two-fingered forearms could probably hold whatever it was eating, but they were too short to reach its mouth.**



Sabre-toothed tiger (smilodon)

- **Large, sabre-like maxillary canine teeth, up to 50 cm long in some species**
- **More robust than today's cats**
- **Bear-like in build**

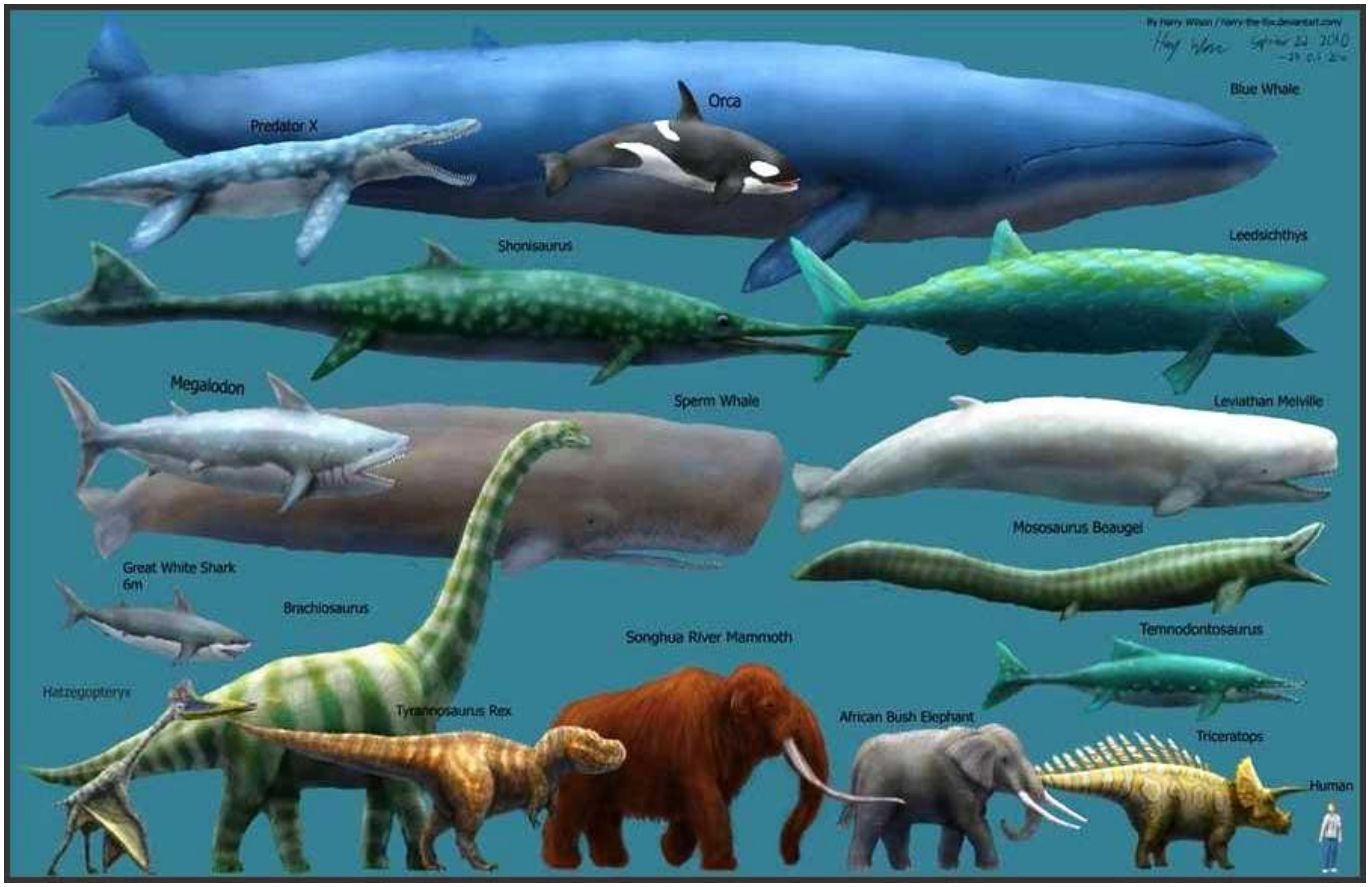
The classic interpretation of a sabertooth cat, a 1905 painting by Charles R. Knight in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

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News Article: Gigantic Fossils of Animals Found
East African Cites Sheep as Big as Horses, Hogs with Elephant like Tusks (New York Times May 11, 1956)

> **"The remains of gigantic animals have been found, including sheep the size of present-day cart horses, hogs with tusks like elephants have been dug out of an ancient gorge at Olduvai in East Africa. Two giant human teeth have also been found."**
> **"Dr. Leakey has found the complete skeleton of a Pleistocene sheep with a horn-span of fourteen feet. He also unearthed wild hogs the size of a rhinoceros with elephant sized tusks. He has found a giant sized giraffe, baboons as big as modern gorillas, massive zebras and antelopes."**

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Size comparison of prehistoric and present animals. Note the blue whale, not as long as Argentinosaurus, yet the most massive creature on earth. Does not have to support itself on legs; the ocean takes care of that.

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Somehow the environment in that Prehistoric Age was so invigorating that it could support the growth of these enormously sized plants and animals, and so widespread too that fertile conditions existed everywhere, even in parts of the world that today are barren, such as in the Polar regions or desert areas.





The fossil forest of dawn redwoods (above) at Axel Heiburg Island in Northern Canada provides graphic evidence that these trees that exist now in mid-latitude areas once flourished in what are now barren, Polar regions. Even dinosaur fossils have been found in these northern areas.





(Left) Here's a look at the warmer, wetter world of Ellesmere Island, in the Prehistoric Age: A hippo-like mammal, called a Coryphodon, enjoys mild temperatures, year-round. (Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History) Notice the contrast with what Ellesmere Island looks like today. (Right)

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Continue to 1-B: What about Mankind in the Age of Prehistory?