



FUN FACTS ABOUT THE DINOSAURS OF GONDWANA

Gondwana was a supercontinent comprising the landmasses of Africa, South America, Australia, and Antarctica, as well as Madagascar and India. It formed when the dynamic forces of plate tectonics split the larger supercontinent of Pangaea in two about 150 million years ago, and it lasted until about 100 million years ago, when it fractured into the individual continents of the Southern Hemisphere.

Recent research shows that Gondwana was home to an almost entirely different set of dinosaurs that evolved in their own unique ways, largely isolated from the dinosaurs we're more familiar with in the Northern Hemisphere. Thirty years ago, many of these species—including [Giganotosaurus](#), [Spinosaurus](#), and [Argentinosaurus](#)—were unknown to science.

[Eoraptor](#), one of the species from Argentina that is featured in [Ultimate Dinosaurs](#), was one of the world's earliest dinosaurs. It was small, for a dinosaur—only three feet in length and weighed approximately 25 pounds.

Fossilized remains of [Suchomimus](#) were first uncovered in the Sahara Desert of Niger in 1997. This animal had a long snout like a crocodile that allowed it to catch fish. In fact, its name means "crocodile mimic." The skulls of spinosaurs like [Suchomimus](#) and crocodiles represent an example of convergent evolution, or the acquisition of similar biological traits in response to similar ecological challenges.

The plant-eating [Ouranosaurus](#) from central Africa had a row of spines along its back that formed a sail. Paleontologists debate the function of this feature. Was it for body temperature regulation? Storing nutrients and fat? Protection? Attracting mates?

Bones of [Majungasaurus](#) with [Majungasaurus](#) tooth marks show that this meat-eating theropod dinosaur from Madagascar was a cannibal, at least some of the time.

[Rapetosaurus](#), a long-necked, sauropod dinosaur from 70 million year old rocks in Madagascar, was named after the mischievous giant, Rapeto, of Malagasy folklore.

Related to the famous [Velociraptor](#) and a distant relative of modern-day birds, [Austroraptor](#) lived 70 million years ago in what is now Patagonia. At up to 16 feet in length, it is one of the largest known dromaeosaurs (raptors) and likely had some sort of plumage.

[Giganotosaurus](#) was South America's apex predator of the late Cretaceous, and it may have been near the maximum possible size for land predators. Nothing since has rivalled its size.

Source: *Ultimate Dinosaurs: Giants from Gondwana* by David C. Evans and Matthew J. Vavrek

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