

75 - Dino Relatives

Did you know that not all dinosaur relatives went extinct 65 million years ago? So, who are these dino descendants?

As you know, dinosaurs went extinct about 65 million years ago -- however, not all living things died out during that time. One of those species are the Chelonians. The ones that walk on land actually appeared right after the dinosaurs went extinct, but some Chelonians that live in the sea today are similar to the ones that were around 110 million years ago. In fact, these reptiles are called "cousins" to the dinosaurs. Any guesses what they are? Here's a hint: they live in their shells. That's right... a Chelonian is another name for... a TURTLE! Tortoises are extremely tough creatures. Nearly 80 percent of all turtle species living at the time of the dinosaur survived the extinction event!

Lobsters and crabs were also both around in the time of the dinosaurs. In fact, lobsters are hundreds of millions of years *older* than dinosaurs! Those ancient lobsters looked a lot different than they do today—some had SIX claws and FOUR eyes! As for crabs, they first appeared during the Jurassic period and grew in population just before the dinosaurs went extinct. It was during that time -- one species of crab developed the shell-breaking claw many crabs have today.

You may have heard in the movies Jurassic Park and Jurassic World, birds are part of the dinosaur family. Scientists believe birds are the only true dinosaurs to survive extinction. And paleontologists studying protein from fossils discovered the world's most fearsome dinosaur, the T-Rex, is most similar to two modern animals: the ostrich... and the chicken! In fact, scientists today study chickens to learn how dinosaurs behaved in the past.

Although crocodiles and alligators are not direct descendants like birds, they do have a lot in common with dinosaurs. Fun Fact: unlike other species, crocs and gators haven't changed much over the past 150 million years. So the alligators and crocodiles you see today look a lot like the ones you'd see roaming around with the dinosaurs.

Cockroaches not only were around at the time of the dinosaur --- they were on the planet 100 million years BEFORE the dinosaurs! The species survived both the dinosaur extinction and a mass extinction before that. They have a reputation for surviving anything. And scientists believe ancient cockroaches helped get rid of huge piles of dinosaur poop by eating it. Some cockroaches still clean up after dinosaurs today, by eating bird poop. Cockroaches also like human and pet food, so if you like to leave crumbs lying about... don't be surprised to find cockroaches in your home.

Things You Will Learn

1. What is a Chelonian?
2. What is the closest living relative to a T-Rex on Earth?
3. What species are older than the dinosaur?

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Activities

1. Do you have kinetic sand, toy dinosaurs and an old toothbrush? Then you can dig for dinosaurs! You can read about this fun activity [here](#).
2. Want to create your own dinosaur? Ask an adult for some dried pasta and play dough for [this](#) creative dino activity.
3. Everyone knows that some dinosaurs were really big, but how do you measure up? [This](#) experiment will help you see just how tall some dinosaurs were. Make sure you include the size of a chicken!

Additional Resources

Want to learn more about T. Rex? The American Museum of Natural History in New York City has an amazing display of dinosaur bones. Explore their [website](#) for articles, pictures, and videos.

Kid News

What is your favorite holiday? How do you celebrate? If your favorite holiday is Holi, you might gather with other people in your town and throw brightly colored powder at each other! This bright festival has many different origin stories but is celebrated throughout India. [Read](#) more about its origin stories and traditions!¹

¹ This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com