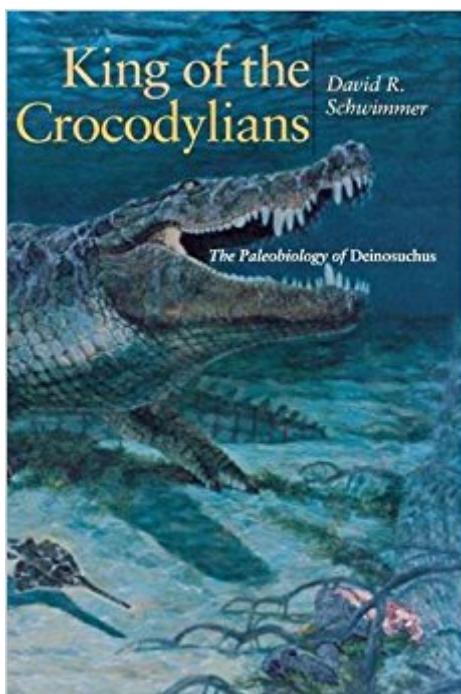


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King Of The Crocodylians: The Paleobiology Of Deinosuchus (Life Of The Past)



Synopsis

Toward the end of the Age of Dinosaurs, during a time known as the Late Cretaceous, a new type of giant predator appeared along the southern coasts of North America. It was a huge species of crocodylian called *Deinosuchus*. Neither a crocodile nor an alligator, it was an ancestor of both modern groups; it reached weights of many tons and it had some features unique to its own species. Average-sized individuals were bigger than the carnivorous dinosaurs with which they co-existed; the largest specimens were the size of a T-rex. King of the Crocodylians, the biography of these giant beasts, tells the long history of their discovery and reports on new research about their makeup. The book also deals with the ancient life and geology of the coastal areas where *Deinosuchus* thrived, its competitors, and its prey, which probably included carnivorous dinosaurs. There is also detailed discussion of the methods used to determine the size of these giant animals, the dating of the fossils, the nature of their living environments, and how we know who ate whom 80 million years ago.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

David Schwimmer's book stands as the most comprehensive look at the natural history of one of the largest crocodylians ever to roam the earth. The opening chapter starts off a lot like Steve Alten's *Meg*. A hapless theropod winds up in the wrong place at the wrong time. While *Meg*'s scenario was entirely fictitious (*Carcharocles megalodon* was not around during the Cretaceous), Schwimmer's scenario is actually based off of some factual evidence. For the rest of the book, Schwimmer justifies

his scenario by presenting evidence for the size, habitats and prey of *Deinosuchus*. Schwimmer breaks up each of the 8 chapters into different sections on *Deinosuchus*. Starting with the semi-fictitious intro, then going into its chaotic taxonomic origin, when, and where it appeared, how big it got, what creatures it was related to, and who was preying on whom back in the Late Cretaceous. All the evidence is viewed objectively, with the author's view stated at the end. Some highlights include an interesting section of the 2nd chapter, which showed some of the bias seen in non-dinosaur/non-mammalian work. More often than not, the reason we know as little as we do about other ancient reptiles, is because of a lack of interest in them. One prime quote from that chapter (pg 29) really sums this up: "Holland (1909) reported that, upon recognizing the animal leaving all these big bone fragments was a huge crocodylian: 'Mr. Hatcher immediately lost interest in the material...'" Thankfully, this skewed point of view has been slowly changing. If it hadn't, then this book would never have been written. Schwimmer also deals with the infamously inaccurate skull reconstruction that used to be on display on the 4th floor of the AMNH.

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