



Dinosaurs!

Scientific American Editors

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Terrible lizards. That's what the word "dinosaurs" means. Yet dinosaurs are not true lizards, and they are not necessarily terrible either. In fact, paleontologists have overturned one misconception after another, and in this eBook, "Dinosaurs!", we look at what the latest research tells us and what we still have to learn about these endlessly fascinating creatures. Section 1, "Prehistoric Beasts," opens with the behemoths that intrigue many of us from childhood. Some grew to more than 100 feet long, and in "How Dinosaurs Grew So Large and So Small," John R. Horner, Kevin Padian and Armand de Ricqlès examine how growth lines in dinosaur bones provide clues about how quickly these animals reached full size. But how did they live and interact? In "Dinosaurs of the Lost Continent," Scott D. Sampson discusses the relatively recent and surprising revelation that distinct communities of dinosaurs once shared a relatively small landmass in the American West. Paleontologists still are not sure whether *Tyrannosaurus rex* was primarily a predator or a scavenger, and in "Breathing Life into *T. rex*," Gregory M. Erickson examines what bite marks and tooth wear say about their behavior. And although most dinosaurs perished in a massive extinction about 66 million years ago, technically they are still around: Birds not only evolved from dinosaurs but also lived alongside them for a while, as Gareth Dyke writes in "Winged Victory." Like the dinosaurs before us, humans are now the dominant species on the planet, but we, too, could face extinction—if not from an asteroid impact, then perhaps from precipitous climate change or nuclear warfare. Dinosaur fossils provide us with tantalizing hints of the fragility of existence—and of the capacity for adaptation.

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Madeline Williams:

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