

Reptiles

Classification

- Crocodilia
- Sphenodontia
- Squamata
- Testudines
- Theropoda

Crocodilia



Crocodilia, containing both alligators^[^1] and crocodiles^[^2], is an order of large reptiles. Reptiles belonging to Crocodilia are the closest living relatives of birds. Reptiles and birds are the only known living descendants of the dinosaurs. Some would say that alligators and crocodiles actually look like small dinosaurs. Dinosaurs that evolved wings are the ancestors of birds.

Sphenodontia



Sphenodontia includes only one living genus that has just two living species, both tuataras (*Sphenodon*). The tuatara is a sphenodont that is found only in New Zealand. The two species of tuatara are the only surviving members of the sphenodontians, who lived around 200 million years ago. Tuataras resemble lizards but are equally related to lizards and snakes, both of which are classified as Squamata. For this reason, tuataras are of great interest both for the study of the evolution of lizards and snakes and for the reconstruction of the appearances and habits of a group of reptile ancestors called diapsids (the group that additionally includes birds and crocodiles).

Squamata



Squamata (scaled reptiles), which includes lizards and snakes, is the largest recent order of reptiles. Members of the order are distinguished by their skin, which bears **horny** scales or shields. They also have movable jaw bones, making it possible for them to move their upper jaw relative to their skull. The movable jaws are most notable in snakes, which are able to open their mouths very wide to swallow large prey. This is also the only reptile group that has both viviparous and ovoviviparous species, as well as the usual oviparous reptiles.

Testudines



Modern turtles are placed into one of two suborders within the Testudines *Pleurodira* (side-necked) and *Cryptodira* (hidden neck). The namesake difference between the two is the method of head retraction. In pleurodires, the neck vertebrae flex laterally, allowing the neck to bend and pull the head in sideways. In cryptodires, the neck vertebrae flex vertically, allowing the head to be drawn straight back within the shell. The *Pelomedusidae* and *Chelidae* are the only extant families of *pleurodires*. The *Carettochelyidae*, *Cheloniidae*, *Chelydridae*, *Dermatemydidae*, *Dermochelyidae*, *Emydidae*, *Kinosternidae*, *Testudinidae*, and *Trionychidae* are all *cryptodires*, although the ability to retract the head has been lost in the sea turtles (*Cheloniidae* and *Dermochelyidae*).

Theropoda



Theropoda (from Ancient Greek 'wild beast', and 'foot'), whose members are known as theropods, is a dinosaur clade that is characterized by hollow bones and three toes and claws on each limb. Theropods are generally classed as a group of saurischian dinosaurs. They were ancestrally carnivorous, although a number of theropod groups evolved to become herbivores and omnivores. Theropods first appeared during the Carnian age of the late Triassic period 231.4 million years ago and included the majority of large terrestrial carnivores from the Early Jurassic until at least the close of the Cretaceous, about 66 Ma. In the Jurassic, birds evolved from small specialized coelurosaurian theropods, and are today represented by about 10,500 living species.

[^1]: You can identify by it's V-shaped snout.

[^2]: You can identify by it's U-shaped snout.

Sources

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