Quick Archelon Facts

Lived during the Late Cretaceous Period

Lived in the oceans around what is now North America

Was the size of a small great white shark

Was a Carnivore

Ate Squids and Jellyfish

About Archelon

Archelon is an extinct sea turtle which lived approximately 75 million to 65 million years ago during the Late Cretaceous Period. It was first discovered in 1895 by Dr. G.R.Wieland in South Dakota. In 1896, he would go on and name it Archelon – a name which means “ruling turtle.”

If you were to merely look at Archelon pictures and nothing else, then you would assume this turtle was a normal sized sea turtle. However, that is far from the case. An average sea turtle is about 7 feet long and weighs around 350 pounds. Archelon, on the other hand, was 12 feet long and weighed around 2 tons – or about 4,000 pounds. That made it about the length of a small great white shark but much, much heavier.

One of the most interesting facts about Tetrapodophis is not its great size but its shell. This turtle didn’t have the same kind of hard shell that modern turtles do today. No, it had either bony plates or a leather-like covering that stretched over a framework of bones on its back. If it would’ve had a hard shell, then it most likely wouldn’t have been able to stay afloat while swimming in the ocean.

Archelon also had flipper-like arms that allowed it to move through the water fairly quickly. Which would’ve been needed considering the kinds of animals it was sharing the ocean with at the time. During this time, Archelon would have had to compete with, and occasionally swim very quickly away from, animals such as Tylosaurus and Cretoxyrhina.

What are some of the things that Archelon ate? Well, more than likely this turtle lived on the plentiful squids and jellyfish which inhabited the waters around North America at that time. It may have also eaten small fish that crossed its path.

Paleontologists believe that Archelon probably had a long lifespan, much like modern turtles do today. Scientists believe that it probably lived around 100 years – on average. They may have lived even longer than that.