

News & Comments

Two Giant Dwarf Crocodile Species Unearthed in Kenya

Fawaz Abdelrazak

An international team of scientists led by the University of Iowa has discovered two species of crocodiles that roamed east Africa between 15 and 18 million years ago.

A new species of giant dwarf crocodile has been discovered in central and west Africa and is called *Kinyang mabokoensis* and *Kinyang tchernovi*.

The snouts of these giant dwarf crocodiles were short and deep, and their teeth were conical and large.

In contrast to modern crocodiles, their nostrils opened somewhat up and to the front. Instead of hunting in the water, the animals enjoyed the forest, where they waited for prey to come to them.

In addition to *Kinyang mabokoensis* and *Kinyang tchernovi*, dwarf crocodiles rarely exceed 1.2-1.5 m (4-5 feet) in length, making them among the fiercest threats to any animal they encountered. Paleontologist Christopher Brochu of the University of Iowa says they were the biggest predators our ancestors faced.

According to researchers, climate change and reduced rainfall are likely to be responsible for the species disappearing from the forests. In place of forests, animals were able to live in grasslands and mixed savanna woodlands that were less suitable for them. Bipedal primates that gave rise to modern humans have also been linked to these environmental changes

The *Kinyang* crocodiles did not become extinct until a very long time ago, so further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis. It would be useful to fill in the gap between these giant dwarf crocodiles and modern species in the fossil record.

Researchers are also uncertain how many teeth these species might have had, for example. It is now possible to match other fossils to the species now that they have been identified.

KEYWORDS

Crocodiles, Fossils, Popular, University of Iowa, Africa, Crocodile, Dwarf crocodile, Giant dwarf crocodile, Kenya, *mabokoensis*, *Kinyang*, Osteolaeminae, Skull, *Kinyang mabokoensis*, *Kinyang tchernovi*

