

ANIMAL WORLD

THE BIGGEST ANIMALS IN THE WORLD

by Samantha S. Bell



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AT A GLANCE

- Big animals use their size to protect themselves from predators. Some also use their size to prey on other animals.
- The saltwater crocodile is the world's biggest reptile. It also has the most powerful bite of any animal. The saltwater crocodile lives in northern Australia, eastern India, and Southeast Asia.
- Saltwater crocodiles are fearsome predators. They will eat almost any kind of animal.
- Ostriches are the world's biggest and heaviest birds. They live in the savanna and desert regions of Africa.
- The ostrich's size protects it from predators. Its strong legs and big wings help it run away from attackers. Its big claws help it fight.
- African elephants are the biggest land animals in the world. They live in the savannas and forests of eastern and southern Africa.



- African elephants use their size to find food and water. They use their huge trunks to breathe, smell, communicate, and move objects.
- Blue whales are the biggest animals ever to have lived on Earth. They are found in every ocean except the Arctic Ocean.
- Because blue whales are so big, orcas are their only natural predators. However, overfishing, pollution, and boat collisions have made the species endangered.

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SALTWATER CROCODILES

Dinosaurs no longer roam the earth, but other huge reptiles do. The world's biggest reptile today is the saltwater crocodile. Females grow to be about 10 feet (3 m) long. They weigh about 330 pounds (150 kg). But the males are much larger. Some are more than 20 feet (6 m) long.

The heaviest one recorded weighed more than 2,000 pounds (907 kg).

Saltwater crocodiles live in northern Australia, eastern India, and Southeast Asia. They are found in many different types of habitats. They swim in creeks, swamps, rivers, and lagoons. These crocodiles live in

Saltwater crocodiles can make many different sounds. They can hiss, bark, growl, and chirp.



fresh water, **brackish** water, and salt water.

They use river currents to travel from one kind of water to another.

Saltwater crocodiles can be found on many of the islands in the region. Some of the islands are separated by large stretches of open ocean. Scientists discovered that the crocodiles often travel more than 30 miles (48 km) out into the ocean. They ride the currents on the ocean's surface like a surfer catching a wave. Hamish Campbell is a scientist at the University of Queensland in Australia. He says, "They can survive for long periods in saltwater without eating or

drinking, so by only traveling when surface currents are favorable, they would be able to move long distances by sea.”¹

Like other crocodiles, saltwater crocodiles have thick skin and **streamlined** bodies. The strong muscles in the crocodile’s large tail help it swim.

RECORD BREAKERS

The biggest crocodile ever recorded was a saltwater crocodile named Lolong. He measured 20 feet and 3 inches (6.17 m) from snout to tail. After his death in 2013, a saltwater crocodile named Cassius was declared the largest living crocodile. He is 17 feet and 11.75 inches (5.48 m) long.

GLOSSARY

brackish

somewhat salty

collisions

crashes between things

dung

animal poop

hydration

the process of absorbing water

mammals

warm-blooded animals with fur or hair that produce milk for their young

offspring

the young of an animal or person

rudders

movable blades positioned at the backs of ships and used to control direction

streamlined

a surface that offers minimum resistance when moving through air or water

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