

WHAT MAKES A DINOSAUR A DINOSAUR?



Hi! I'm Sam,
a paleontologist. I study fossils of
ancient living things, like dinosaurs.
Dinosaurs are a type of reptile that
lived long ago—but not every
ancient reptile is a dinosaur.
So, what makes a dinosaur
a dinosaur?

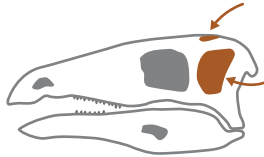
This Stegosaurus
is a dinosaur. They lived
about 150 million years ago.
We find Stegosaurus fossils in
western North America,
but NOT IN
OREGON.

Bummer.

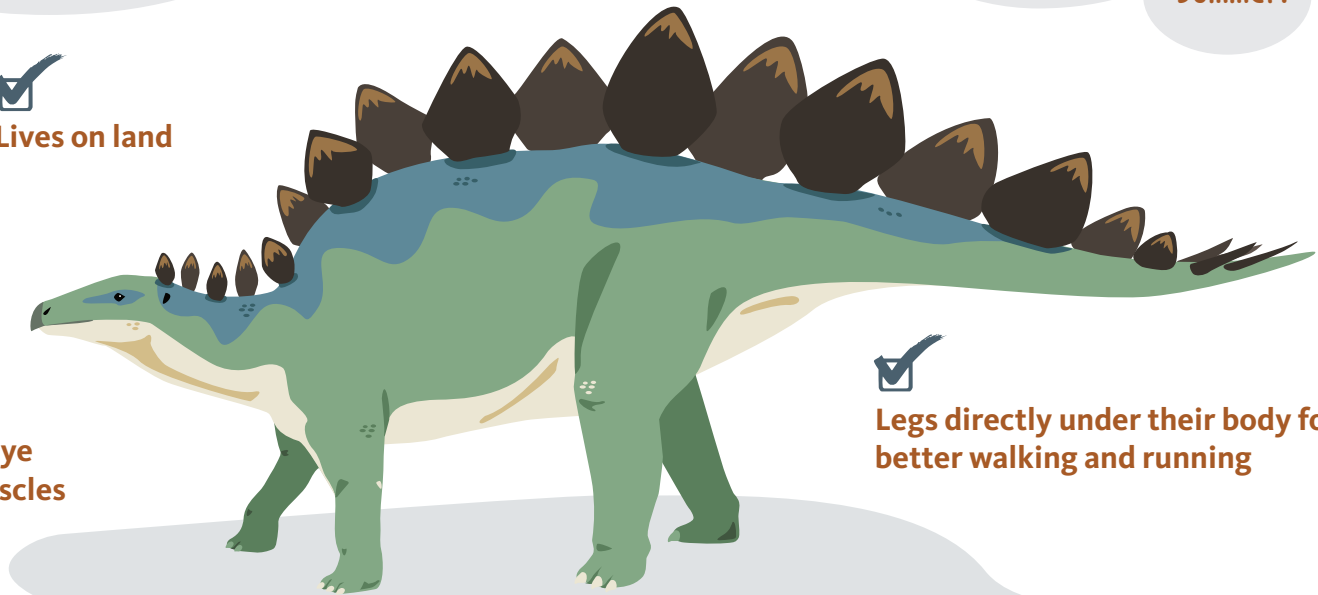
Lives on land

Reptile
All dinosaurs are
reptiles, but not all
reptiles are dinosaurs.

Two holes in the bone behind each eye
make space for large, strong jaw muscles



Lays eggs



Legs directly under their body for
better walking and running



Lizard
stance



Crocodile
stance

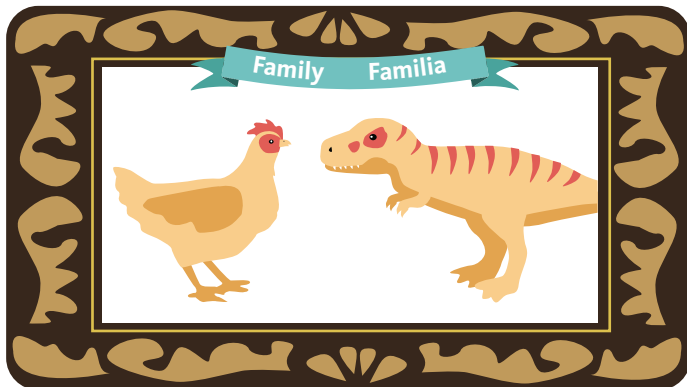
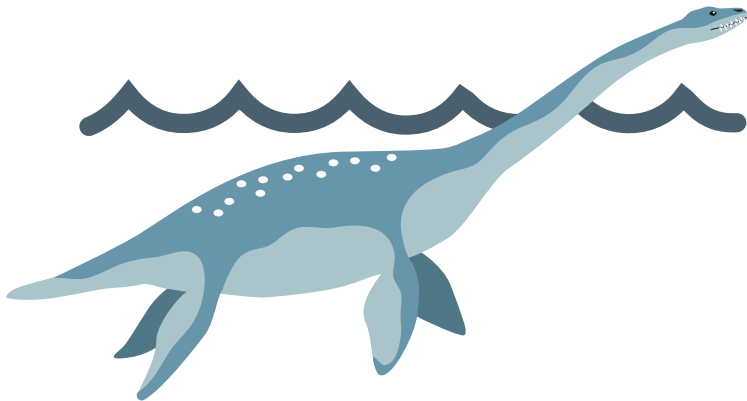
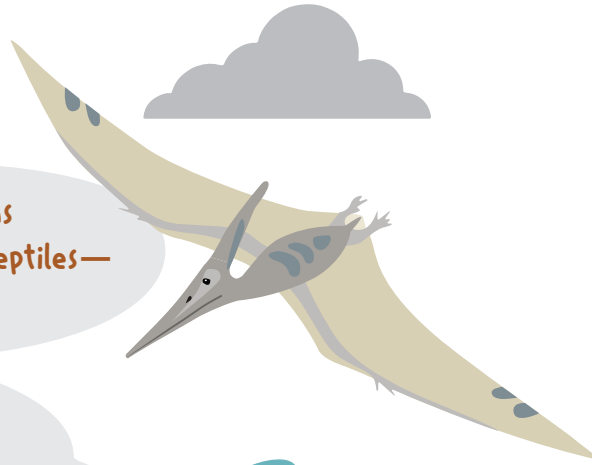


Dinosaur
stance

WHAT ABOUT THESE ANIMALS?

Pterosaurs, such as Pteranodon, are flying reptiles—NOT dinosaurs.

Plesiosaurs are swimming reptiles—NOT dinosaurs. They are more closely related to lizards and turtles than to dinosaurs.



Have you heard that birds are descended from dinosaurs? It's true! A chicken has more in common with a T-rex than a pterosaur, including legs directly under their bodies and three-toed feet.

WHY ARE DINOSAUR FOSSILS SO RARE IN OREGON?



When dinosaurs first evolved, Oregon was underwater, so there was no land for dinosaurs to live on.



Dinosaurs probably lived here later in time, but eruptions from Oregon's volcanoes buried their fossils under a huge layer of lava—making them hard to find.