



## Dinosaur Skeleton Uncovered in Sahara Desert

### Are all prehistoric animals dinosaurs?

- What most people think of as dinosaurs actually fall into three categories.
- Dinosaurs roamed on the land, pterosaurs flew and plesiosaurs swam in the seas.

**Palaeontologists**, searching for fossils in a part of the Sahara desert in Morocco, have uncovered the first complete skeleton of a **Spinosaurus** for 100 years.

You may have read recently about how scientists believe that velociraptors were quite different to the way they are shown in films, books and on TV.

Well, this new Spinosaurus fossil appears to show that all the toys, books and films about Spinosauruses are slightly wrong too.

Only one previous Spinosaurus skeleton has ever been found: it was destroyed during the Second World War. This meant that, until now, scientists knew very little about Spinosauruses: they had long jaws like that of a crocodile, giant sails on their back and were the largest of all **carnivorous** dinosaurs.

Yes - even larger than a Tyrannosaurus rex!

Thanks to the discovery of the new skeleton, though, scientists have been able to learn lots more about this misunderstood meat eater.

They noticed that it had a nostril far back on its head and very **dense** arm and leg bones. Both of which would help an animal to swim. Also, Spinosauruses are typically shown standing on two legs.

However, by studying its skeleton, the scientists now think that it probably found standing on two legs very difficult. This means that it probably didn't walk on land very



Illustration: A Spinosaurus swimming.

much. They also noticed something special about its tail.

They discovered that a Spinosaurus' tail was actually much wider and flatter than previously thought. It may have looked similar to that of a modern-day newt's tail. But much larger of course!

David Martill, one of the scientists involved, said, "Discovering its tail was such an amazing gift. We had no idea that its tail was going to be so different from other dinosaur tails."

This would have allowed them to swim quickly and easily through deep water to hunt fish and other **aquatic** animals.

### Glossary

<b>palaeontologists</b>	Scientists who study dinosaur fossils.
<b>carnivorous</b>	An animal that eats mainly meat.
<b>dense</b>	Very heavy in relation to its size.
<b>aquatic</b>	Growing or living in or near water.

# Questions

1. What modern-day animal's tail was the Spinosaurus' tail compared to?

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2. 'Paleontologists, searching for fossils in a part of the Sahara desert in Morocco, have uncovered the first complete skeleton of a Spinosaurus for 100 years.'

Tick the word which is closest to 'uncovered' in this sentence.

- ☐ took off a top layer
- ☐ not wearing any clothes
- ☐ discovered
- ☐ removed a layer or section to reveal more

3. Find and copy **two** new facts about Spinosauruses that the scientists discovered recently.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Tick whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
The skeleton showed the Spinosaurus had dense arm and leg bones.		
Discovering its tail was an amazing gift.		
The fossil was discovered in the Sahara desert.		
The Spinosaurus is an interesting dinosaur.		

5. Professor David Martill said, "Discovering its tail was such an amazing gift."

Why do you think he used the word 'gift' in his description?

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6. Summarise the key information in this article using 15 words or fewer.

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# Answers

1. What modern-day animal's tail was the Spinosaurus' tail compared to?

**a newt**

2. 'Paleontologists, searching for fossils in a part of the Sahara desert in Morocco, have uncovered the first complete skeleton of a Spinosaurus for 100 years.'

Tick the word which is closest to 'uncovered' in this sentence.

- ☐ took off a top layer  
☐ not wearing any clothes  
☒ **discovered**  
☐ removed a layer or section to reveal more

3. Find and copy **two** new facts about Spinosauruses that the scientists discovered recently.

**Accept any two answers referring to the new discoveries: dense arm and leg bones; small nostril far back on the head; difficulty standing on two legs; a tail different to other dinosaurs that helped it swim; it's unlikely it spent much time on land.**

4. Tick whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
The skeleton showed the Spinosaurus had dense arm and leg bones.	✓	
Discovering its tail was an amazing gift.		✓
The fossil was discovered in the Sahara desert.	✓	
The Spinosaurus is an interesting dinosaur.		✓

5. Professor David Martill said, "Discovering its tail was such an amazing gift." Why do you think he used the word 'gift' in his description?

**Accept any sensible answer referring to it: being unexpected; feeling like a special discovery; the luck he felt at receiving this new knowledge; it making him happy like a gift or a present.**

6. Summarise the key information in this article using 15 words or fewer.

**Accept any reasonable answer which includes the key information. e.g. Some scientists now think that Spinosauruses swam and hunted fish.**