

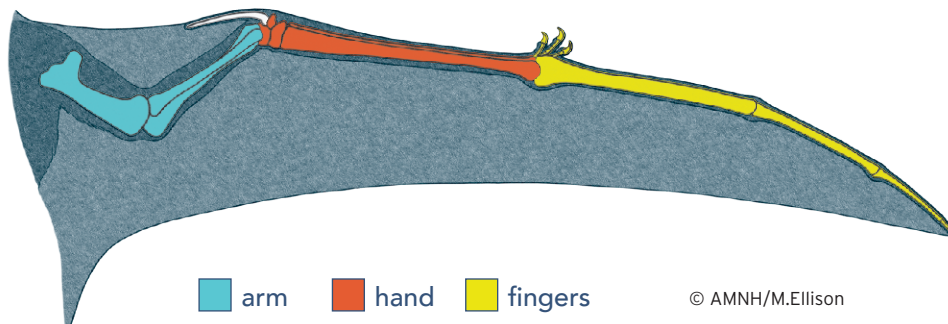
Student Reading

Flying Pterosaurs

Millions of years ago the skies were ruled by flying reptiles. They were not birds. They were not even dinosaurs! These flying reptiles were called pterosaurs.



Pterosaurs had wings. These body parts helped them fly. A single finger supported each pterosaur wing. That fourth finger was longer than the rest of their arm! Their wings bones were hollow. That made pterosaurs lighter.



Scientists who study ancient plants and animals are called paleontologists. They explore rock layers around the planet to find fossils. These fossils give information about plants and animals that are extinct. By studying fossils, paleontologists learned that there were at least 150 different kinds of pterosaurs!

Pterosaurs came in all shapes and sizes. Some were as large as a fighter jet. Others were as small as a paper airplane. Pterosaurs' body parts helped them survive. Some had sharp teeth. Others had no teeth. Some pterosaurs had long tails. Some had no tails. Many pterosaurs had large crests on their heads. They may have used those crests to attract mates. Or they may have used the crests to find others of their kind.

Pterosaurs lived in different environments. Some lived by the sea. Others lived in forests. They also ate different things. Some ate fish. Some ate insects. Others ate fruit.

Meet three different types of pterosaurs. Find out how their body parts help them survive in their environments.

Pterodaustro guinazui

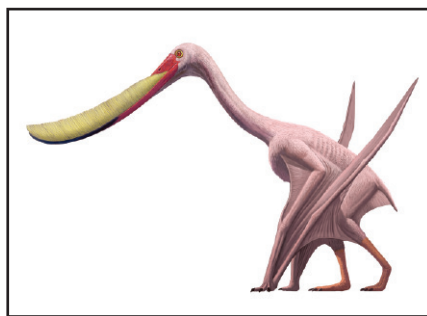
(pronunciation: tair-o-DOW-stro gee-NA-zoo-eye)

Pterodaustro had about 1,000 teeth in its beak. But the teeth were not for biting. Scientists think this pterosaur used its thin teeth to filter small animals out of the water. First it would dip its beak in the water. Next it shook its head back and forth. Then it probably used its tongue to push the water out of its mouth. Tiny creatures like brine shrimp got trapped inside. The result? A tasty meal!



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This fossil is around 100 million years old. It belonged to a pterosaur named *Pterodaustro*. It lived along the shores of lakes in what is now Argentina.



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Pterodaustro had a wingspan of 8 feet (2.5 meters). It ate small arthropods, crustaceans, mollusks, and other tiny animals that lived in lakes.

Dimorphodon macronyx

(pronunciation: dye-MORF-o-don ma-KRON-ix)

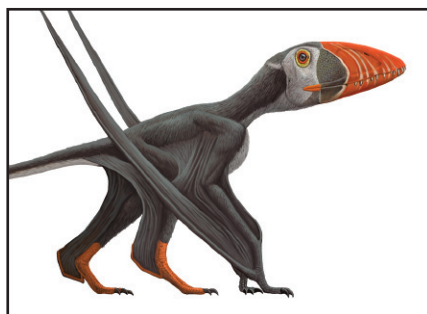
Dimorphodon had a large head for its size. It also had a very long tail. It had long, curved teeth at the front of its jaws. But its back teeth were short and pointed. These two types of teeth helped this pterosaur catch and eat more than one kind of prey.

Like all pterosaurs, *Dimorphodon* folded its wing like an umbrella when it walked. This way the wings would not get damaged. And the wings would not trip up the pterosaur.



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This fossil is around 200 million years old. It belonged to a pterosaur named *Dimorphodon*. It lived on a coast in what is now southern England.



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Dimorphodon had a wingspan of up to 4 feet 7 inches (1.4 m). It ate insects, fish, and other small vertebrates (animals with backbones).

Pteranodon longiceps

(pronunciation: ter-AN-o-don LON-ji-seps)

Pteranodon flew over open water looking for food. When it saw a fish it dived into the water, just like a pelican does today. It would swallow the fish and then return to the surface. This pterosaur was huge. It had a 20-foot (6-meter) wingspan. For many years *Pteranodon* was the largest known pterosaur.



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This fossil is around 85 million years old. It belonged to a pterosaur named *Pteranodon*. It lived in North America.



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Pteranodon had a wingspan of up to 20 feet (6 m). It ate fish.