



HERITAGE

HUGE SHARK JAW



THE WORLD'S LARGEST SHARK JAWS

Carcharocles megalodon

Miocene

South Carolina

The largest predator that ever existed; the Megalodon was a shark that grew up to the length of two City buses and preyed on whales and other sharks. Megalodons hunted in every ocean and its fossilized teeth have been found in dozens of countries around the world. The present specimen is the biggest Megalodon jaw ever assembled, with a dentition composed of 182 fine quality fossil teeth up to 7 ¼ inches in length.

While Megalodon teeth have been discovered on many Continents, the best quality teeth are found along the coastal plains of the Mid-Atlantic States. The majority of the teeth in this specimen were personally collected by the esteemed late Vito Bertucci in the rivers of South Carolina. It took over 16 years of diving to find teeth of the right size, shape and condition to make the largest shark jaw set in the world. The jaws have been modeled after and scaled up from a Great White jaw and measures 11 feet across and 8 ¾ feet tall. Recognized as scientifically accurate, each tooth position with their unique shape is represented by 4 rows of teeth and correctly positioned on the jaws.

There are a total of 182 fossil teeth, all well preserved and most possess fine serrations and good enamel coverage. The natural colors of the fossil teeth vary, ranging from earthy browns to gun-metal blues to rusty orange. The largest tooth, measuring 7 5/8 inches in length along the diagonal with 7 ¼ inches of it fully exposed above the gum line, and is among the largest Megalodon tooth ever discovered. Three other anterior teeth measure over 7 inches in length but have ¼ inch of their length covered under the gum line.

The History of Megalodon

The first descriptions of Megalodon teeth originated in the Renaissance period of Europe, with the teeth being interpreted as the petrified tongues of dragons and snakes; called glossopetrae. In 1667, Danish naturalist Nicolaus Steno recognized them as shark teeth and mentioned them in his texts. Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz named the fossil shark *Carcharodon megalodon* in 1835. The species megalodon meant "big tooth" in Greek, while the species was placed in the *Carcharodon* genus based on the similarity of the teeth to those of the Great White shark.

In the 20th century, Megalodon was assigned to the *Carcharocles* genus based on morphological differences between *Carcharocles* and *Carcharodon* teeth. It is generally accepted within the ichthyologic research community that *Carcharocles* is the correct genus; however, *Carcharodon* continues to be popular amongst many collectors.





The Biology of Megalodon

Megalodon ruled the temperate and warm waters of all the oceans between 25 and 1.5 million years ago. They hunted in a variety of environments including coastal zones, lagoons, and deep water. Megalodon teeth have been found on every continent with the exception of Antarctica and have even been found in the Mariana trench. Several fossil sites including the Calvert Formation of Maryland and the Bone Valley Formation of Florida represent nursery sites where live young were born in safe and prey-rich waters.

The maximum size of the Megalodon has been of much debate; cartilage rarely fossilizes and therefore no complete shark has ever been found. However, near-complete sets of dentitions have been found, which allows for accurate reconstructions of large jaws. Based on the larger sizes of teeth that have been found, the largest Megalodons were likely greater than 60 feet in length, with possible giants growing over 90 feet long.

Megalodon consumed a variety of whales and other large marine fauna. Bite marks in whale bones match up perfectly with marks that would have been made by Megalodon teeth. Also, Megalodon teeth are often found in association with fossil whale bones. Research has found that Megalodon rammed and tried to break the bones of smaller whales, injuring them before consuming them. Another tactic would be to bite off the flippers and tails of larger whales, immobilizing them before going in for the kill.

After more than 20 million years of dominance, Megalodon went extinct around 1.5 million years ago during the Pleistocene. A combination of cooling sea temperatures and a reduction in the number of prey species contributed to the Megalodon's extinction.



Vito Bertucci – “Megalodon Man”

Vito Bertucci collected Megalodon teeth for over twenty-years and was passionate about aquatic fossil hunting. Originally a jeweler and goldsmith, he was an avid scuba diver and began underwater fossil collecting in the early 1980's. As his collection of Megalodon teeth grew, he became the first fossil collector to discover a Megalodon tooth over 7 inches in length. This discovery inspired him to research the maximum length of the Megalodon and then try to build a complete jaw set utilizing the teeth from his collection. He built his first jaw set with fossil teeth up to 6 inches because he did not have enough 7 inch teeth to create the largest jaws. Of his work; a 5 ½ foot tall jaw with 6 inch teeth hangs in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, while a 6 ½ foot tall jaw is on display at the Baltimore Aquarium. His works have been featured in National Geographic World magazine and on the National Geographic Channel. His passion for sharks and fossils was so great that he opened and operated a shark museum in Port Royal, South Carolina. After 16 years of collecting, he finally had enough correct sized teeth to create the largest jaws in the world, which took over a year and a half to build. Vito Bertucci passed away in October of 2004 while diving for Shark Teeth in South Carolina.



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