



At a length of 52 feet and weighing in excess of 60 tons, *Carcharodon megalodon* was the second largest predator that ever existed on this planet, the largest being the sperm whale. Megalodon was larger and heavier than *T. rex*. Scientific reconstructions of this shark estimate the dorsal fin 5.5 feet tall, the pectoral fins at 10 feet in length and the tail over 12 feet high. If you were unfortunate enough to have a megalodon swim over you, the pectoral fins would measure 30 feet from tip to tip with a torso in

excess of 10 feet thick! The jaws were so large that this shark would be able to swallow a Rhinoceros whole. A predator this size would have most likely fed on large marine vertebrates especially whales. Fossil teeth have been found in excess of 7 inches in length! Megalodon teeth are similar in geometry to the modern White Shark and scientists are still passionately divided on the origin of the two species and if megalodon is related to the modern white shark. It is also not fully understood why this giant killer became extinct but we can all be glad it is. A day at the beach just wouldn't be what it is today!

From the middle Miocene, 16 million years ago to the earliest Pliocene, about 4.5 million years ago, no other region in North America can claim a more varied and richer wealth of important vertebrate fossil finds than from the famous BONE VALLEY region in the phosphate mining district of Central Florida. During this time, thick forests and grassy plains covered a stubby peninsula that only went as far south to what is now Polk County. If you were to visit this area at that time, you would find six-foot tortoises, shovel-tusked mastodons, hornless rhinos, humpless camels, iguanas, gila monsters, and 30-foot crocodiles. The warm waters surrounding the area were filled with a rich variety of life as well, including long-beaked dolphins, bony fish, rays, sea cows and sharks including the notorious and now extinct giant killer shark, megalodon.