



Mosasaurus Fact Sheet

Common Name: Mosasaurus hoffmannii

Scientific Name: Hoffmann's Meuse River lizard

Wild Status: Cretaceous Period, 70-66 MYA

Habitat: Netherlands

Country: Netherlands

Shelter: Unknown

Life Span: Unknown

Size: 56 feet long, 8 tons

Details

Although it lived at the same time, *Mosasaurus* was not a [dinosaur](#) - it was not even a close relative. [Mosasaurs](#) were actually a variety of [lizard](#) that had adapted for an oceanic lifestyle. Their legs evolved into flippers and their tails flattened to make swimming more efficient. Modern [monitor lizards](#), such as the infamous [Komodo dragon](#), are the closest living relatives of the *Mosasaurus*. When first discovered, it was believed that *Mosasaurus* swam by undulating its elongated body in a manner similar to a [snake](#) or eel. This is an excellent design for efficient long-distance swimming and [pursuit predation](#). However, recent discoveries have shown that Mosasaurus actually possessed crescent-shaped tail [flukes](#) not unlike those of sharks. Rather than moving the entire body side to side, Mosasaurus would have only used their tails for locomotion. With body held stiff to reduce water resistance, *Mosasaurus* would have been able to swim with considerable speed and more and may have relied more on [ambush](#) to capture prey.

Cool Facts

- Even though it is a [reptile](#), *Mosasaurus* has a few characteristics that are decidedly non-reptilian. For starters, it gave birth to live young. Being so adapted for aquatic life, females were unable to come ashore to lay [eggs](#) like [sea turtles](#) do.
- Young would have been born tail-first to prevent drowning. Analysis of its bones indicates that *Mosasaurus* would have been able to keep its body temperature fixed several degrees above that of the surrounding sea water, meaning it was [warm-blooded](#). All these seemingly mammalian traits are all adaptations to being a marine reptile.
- *Mosasaurus* is sometimes known as the “*T. rex* of the deep” and indeed, it was the [apex predator](#) of its environment. Its diet included [bony fish](#), [sharks](#), [seabirds](#), [pterosaurs](#), turtles, [ammonites](#), [plesiosaurs](#), and [even smaller members of its own kind](#). *Mosasaurus* teeth lack cutting edges or grinding surfaces, meaning that prey had to be swallowed whole. Double-hinged jaws and highly flexible skulls allowed *Mosasaurus* to engulf food items man-sized or even slightly larger.

Taxonomic Breakdown

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Mosasauridae

Genus: *Mosasaurus*

Species: *M. hoffmannii*

Conservation & Helping

Mosasaurus is currently [extinct](#) and lived from 70 to 66 million years ago.

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