

## ARE THERE ANY DINOSAURS ALIVE NOW?

Millions of years ago, the earth was full of life, from the warm seas swarming with creatures, to the sky full of insects and flying reptiles. On the ground, dinosaurs and mammals populated the forests and plains. Where are they now? It may surprise you to know that the birds you see are actually dinosaurs! Some of their ancestors are alive today and have evolved into many of the mammals, birds and reptiles that we are familiar with. They are the direct descendants of the incredible animals that lived over 65 million years ago.

Scientists know that 66 million years ago something happened. A comet or an asteroid the size of a mountain, travelling at 40,000 miles an hour smashed into the Earth. A huge fireball brighter than the sun lit up the land and skies. Within seconds the heat and explosion wiped out everything within a 700 mile radius. Huge rocks would have been sent flying to the edge of space, falling across the earth, killing more and starting fires. A giant tsunami hundreds of metres high raced across the oceans. The skies darkened as the ash and debris from the explosion hung in the atmosphere, cutting out light, changing the environment and causing global warming that eventually wiped out 80% of remaining life.

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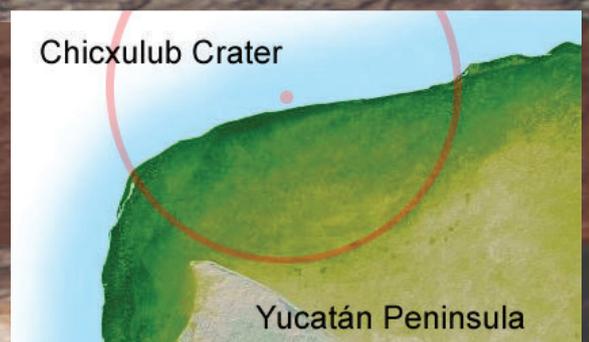
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There is a lot of evidence that this theory is correct. A 112 mile wide crater was discovered in the 1990's shows that a comet or asteroid about 8 miles wide did hit the earth 66 million years ago. The centre of the crater is located just off the shore of what is now the Yucatan Peninsula in South East Mexico.



This rock sample shows a lighter layer of rock that has levels of a chemical called iridium 100 times higher than the layer above and below it. This layer is also from 66 million years ago and is further proof that a huge asteroid or comet collided with our planet, setting off events that would wipe out the dinosaurs and setup the conditions for the dominance and evolution of mammals, eventually leading to us, humans.