

Dunkleosteus terrelli

Ohio's State Fossil Fish | 29 Feet | 8,800 pounds

QUICK FACTS

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Dunkleosteus terrelli*

HOW TO SAY IT: DUNK-ul-AH-stee-us TARE-rell-eye

NICKNAME: "Dunk"

AGE: Late Devonian Period

TIME: About 360 million years ago (130 million years before first dinosaurs)

STATUS: Extinct (none are living today)

THE AGE OF FISHES

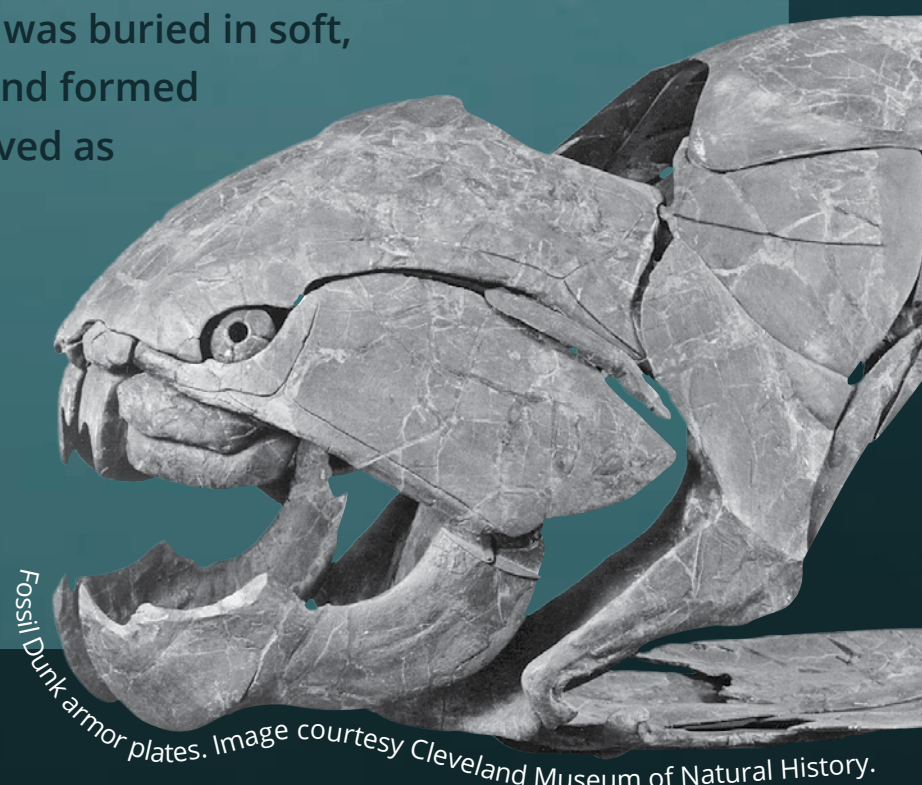
Dunkleosteus terrelli (the "Dunk") was the top predator near the end of the Devonian Period, known as the "Age of Fishes." The Dunk belonged to a now-extinct group of fishes called *placoderms* (PLA-kuh-durms), or "plate skin" fish. The front part of the Dunk's body was covered with bony plates, like a layer of armor.

The Dunk cruised the surface of a sea that once covered Ohio. It had a strong, fast bite and likely ate early sharks, other placoderms, and invertebrates (animals without backbones). Instead of teeth, the Dunk had exposed bone on its jaws for slicing through its prey.

When a Dunk died, its body sank to the bottom of the sea, where it was buried in soft, black mud. Over millions of years, fine muddy sediments piled up and formed a sedimentary rock called *shale*. The Dunk's hard armor was preserved as fossils within the shale.

Dunkleosteus fossils have been found in many places around the world, including North America (especially Ohio), Europe, and northern Africa. Many of the world's best *Dunkleosteus* fossils were collected in northern Ohio from layers of black shale that geologists call the Cleveland Shale. Some of these fossils are now on display in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Learn more at geosurvey.ohiodnr.gov



Fossil Dunk armor plates. Image courtesy Cleveland Museum of Natural History.



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