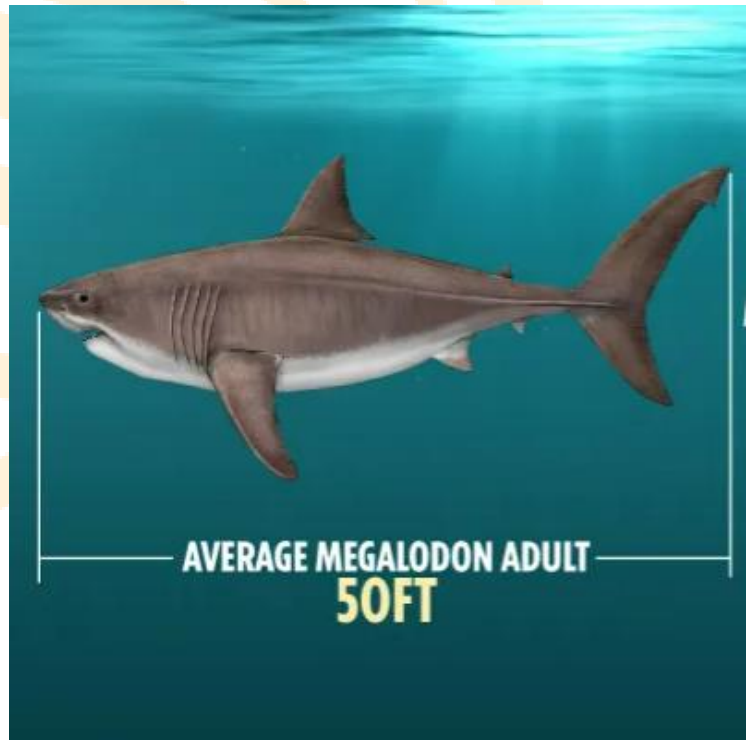


Cliffe Castle Museum

Petrified Megalodon Tooth

This is a petrified fossil of a Megalodon's tooth, you can find it in the Fossils gallery at Cliffe Castle Museum. The Megalodon was a prehistoric species of shark that lived in Earth's oceans from around 23 to 3 million years ago, which was the time after dinosaurs had become extinct and before humans had evolved. The megalodon is considered one of the largest and most powerful predators to have ever existed. They were much larger than modern sharks. Using fossils like this, palaeontologists have estimated that these sharks typically grew to around 50ft in length (approx. 15m), which is longer than a bus! Some fossils indicate that the largest female megalodons could reach up to 80ft in length (approx. 24m). Fossils form when a living thing dies in or near the water. Some parts of the body will decay, but hard matter like bone and teeth stay intact. Under the water, the remains are covered in layer upon layer of sediments (particles of earth, sand or rock). Over the years, the remains are further buried in the compacted layers of sediment, forming rock around the fossil. A petrified fossil (like our Megalodon Tooth) is when, over millions of years, the remains are replaced by minerals which get through tiny gaps between particles in the rock, creating a perfect mineral cast of the bone, tooth or other remains that were once there.



Talk Topics

- How do scientists use a tooth to estimate the size of the Megalodon?
- Describe the process of fossilisation which has preserved this Megalodon tooth.
- What clues about the Megalodon's diet and behaviour can we get from this fossilised tooth?
- What are some key similarities and differences between the Megalodon and modern sharks?
- How do discoveries of fossils help us to build an understanding of prehistoric life in the oceans and on land?
- Why do you think Megalodon teeth capture people's imaginations and interest?