Was Megalodon So Big It Was Forced to Become a Scavenger?

Bestselling paleo-author's studies reveals shocking results that suggest one of the world's largest carnivores fed mainly on the dead.

A Megalodon shark appropriates a whale carcass from smaller sharks, by Alberto Gennari.


Teeth of a great white shark compared to those of Megalodon.

NEW HOPE, PA, US, April 25, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Everyone has heard of Carcharocles megalodon (AKA Otodus megalodon), the devourer of whales, as well as the terrifying villain of an assortment of novels and films, including last summer's surprise hit "The Meg". But was this mammoth carnivore really an unstoppable killing machine, or was it a slow swimming hulk that was forced to live life as a scavenger, stealing the rotting remains of other predators' kills? Max Hawthorne, author of the best-selling paleo-fiction Kronos Rising series, feels that juvenile Megalodons remained active hunters, but the bulky adults were forced to obtain the majority of their food from carrion – dead whales.

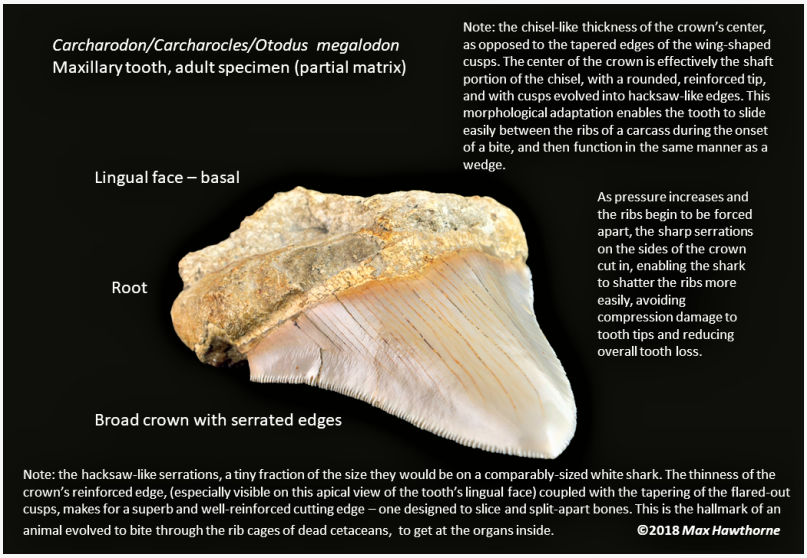
"It's a matter of physics and tooth morphology," explained Hawthorne, who does extensive research for his popular marine terror books. "It's common knowledge that the bigger a shark gets the slower it becomes. Part of this is sheer mass, and part is the limitations of a skeleton made of cartilage. We know that whale sharks, which swim at three mph, get as big as Megalodon. Yet they're incapable of attaining the size or speed of the plankton-eating blue whale, despite having a similar diet. When it comes to agility, cartilage is great for normal-sized sharks and it probably benefited smaller Megalodons, but a fifty-ton adult was undoubtedly a cumbersome animal."

Hawthorne says his findings are supported by changes that take place in the shark's enormous teeth – over seven inches in the largest adults.

"At birth, Megalodon teeth are virtually identical to a great white's – sharp, triangular blades with nasty serrations. But unlike the white shark's, whose teeth remain relatively unchanged at adult sizes, the Megalodon's become thicker, blunter, with tiny serrations. They change from steak

knives to bone chisels with hacksaw-like edges."

The author concludes that adult Megalodons, struggling to chase down fleeter whales, often resorted to appropriating whale carcasses from smaller sharks. Unfortunately, said carcasses were often stripped, forcing the shark to target whatever protein remained. In this case, the whale's heart and lungs, shielded behind thick ribs. "The maxillary teeth of Megalodon function like sharp-edged wedges and are perfectly designed to slip between whale ribs and split them apart," Hawthorne said. "It could crack open a whale's rib cage like a nutcracker cracking a nut. We know this happened, because many fossilized whale ribs bear evidence of being shattered by Megalodon."



Megalodon tooth study

When asked if this dietary change made the shark any less fearsome, Hawthorne grinned. "Less fearsome? I wouldn't want to be in the water with one!"

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