



A WORD ON THEROPODS

Theropods are bipedal, primarily carnivorous dinosaurs that provided the world's top predators from the Early Jurassic to the end of the Cretaceous. The suborder theropoda covers a wide array of dinosaurs, from some of the very first to evolve, such as *Eoraptor*, all the way to their modern descendents: the birds. Theropods comprise a large majority of the dinosaurs most people would be very familiar with. The famous *Tyrannosaurus Rex* belongs to the suborder theropoda, as do the infamous raptors that prowled the screen in movies like *Jurassic Park*.

Physically speaking, theropod dinosaurs are typified by a number of characteristics. They were bipedal, standing on powerful legs that, in some species, could propel them forward at speeds rivaling modern-day cheetahs. They had hollow, thin-walled bones, a characteristic that links them with modern birds, and yet another sign of their evolutionary history. Theropod hands displayed three fingers, with a reduced fourth and fifth digit, while theropod feet had three large, weight-bearing toes and a reduced fourth and fifth toe. Theropods were primarily carnivores, and most featured recurved teeth, useful for tearing flesh, and sharp talons on fingers and toes.

Theropod dinosaurs evolved in the Middle Triassic; in fact, early members, such as *Eoraptor* and *Herrerasaurus*, were some of the first dinosaurs to evolve. In the Late Triassic, lightweight theropods such as *Coelophysis* led the way to a dinosaur-dominated planet.

Early theropods were fairly small, usually not more than 75-150 pounds, but into the Early Jurassic, the first truly large predatory dinosaurs began to evolve. One of the first large theropods was *Dilophosaurus*, a lean muscular dinosaur that hunted the Jurassic forests. It's descendents, such as *Ceratosurus* and the famous *Allosaurus*, grew much larger in the Middle and Late Jurassic, up to 40 feet in length for the largest allosaurs.

The Cretaceous Period saw an even greater diversification of theropods. Smaller forms, such as the dromeosaurs, continued the evolutionary march toward the first birds, even evolving feathers and other bird-like features. The larger theropods became true giants in the Middle to Late Cretaceous, giving rise to the largest terrestrial carnivores the world has ever seen.

Gigantic forms such as *Giganotosaurus*, *Spinosaurus*, and *Tyrannosaurus Rex* became the undisputed super-predators of the planet, and their massive, toothy jaws still awe us today in museums around the world.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In this product, I have endeavored to present an array of theropod dinosaurs that highlight different stages of the order's evolutionary development. This gives DMs and players a wide range of sizes and challenge ratings to choose from, and there are dinosaurs here that are perfect for animal companions, mounts, and even familiars. Here you will find man-sized, speedy predators, gigantic, 8-ton monsters, and everything in between, enough to populate your ancient jungles and primeval forests with some truly unique and powerful animals.

The special attacks featured by each dinosaur in this volume are based on actual scientific hypotheses and theories of how these animals might have behaved. Although the abilities are listed in the write-ups for individual animals, two of these special attacks are appropriate for most of the dinosaurs presented here, and for similar dinosaurs featured in other products. Below is a description of these new special attacks and how they can be implemented.

Gaping Charge (Ex): When a creature with this special attack makes a charge attack in conjunction with a bite, it inflicts double bite damage plus 1.5 times its Strength bonus. This in addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge.

Shake (Ex): If a creature with this special attack begins its turn with an opponent held in its mouth (see Improved Grab), it can attempt a new grapple check (as though attempting to pin the opponent). If it succeeds, it violently shakes its prey, inflicting normal bite damage to the held opponent. In addition, a creature that has been shaken must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw or be stunned for 1 round. Unless otherwise noted, the opponent can be up to one size category smaller than the shaking creature. The saving throw is Constitution-based.