

How big were the dinosaurs?

Not all dinosaurs looked the same—they were as varied and diverse as animals today, and came in all shapes and sizes. Some were tiny, while others were bigger than an elephant.

The biggest dinosaur that we know about was a massive herbivore called *Argentinosaurus*.

Argentinosaurus reached lengths of 98–115 feet (30–35 meters), leading scientists to believe that this is the largest land animal in history. It lived during the Cretaceous Period in the area that is now South America, and was part of a family of huge sauropods (huge herbivores with long necks and tails) called titanosaurs.

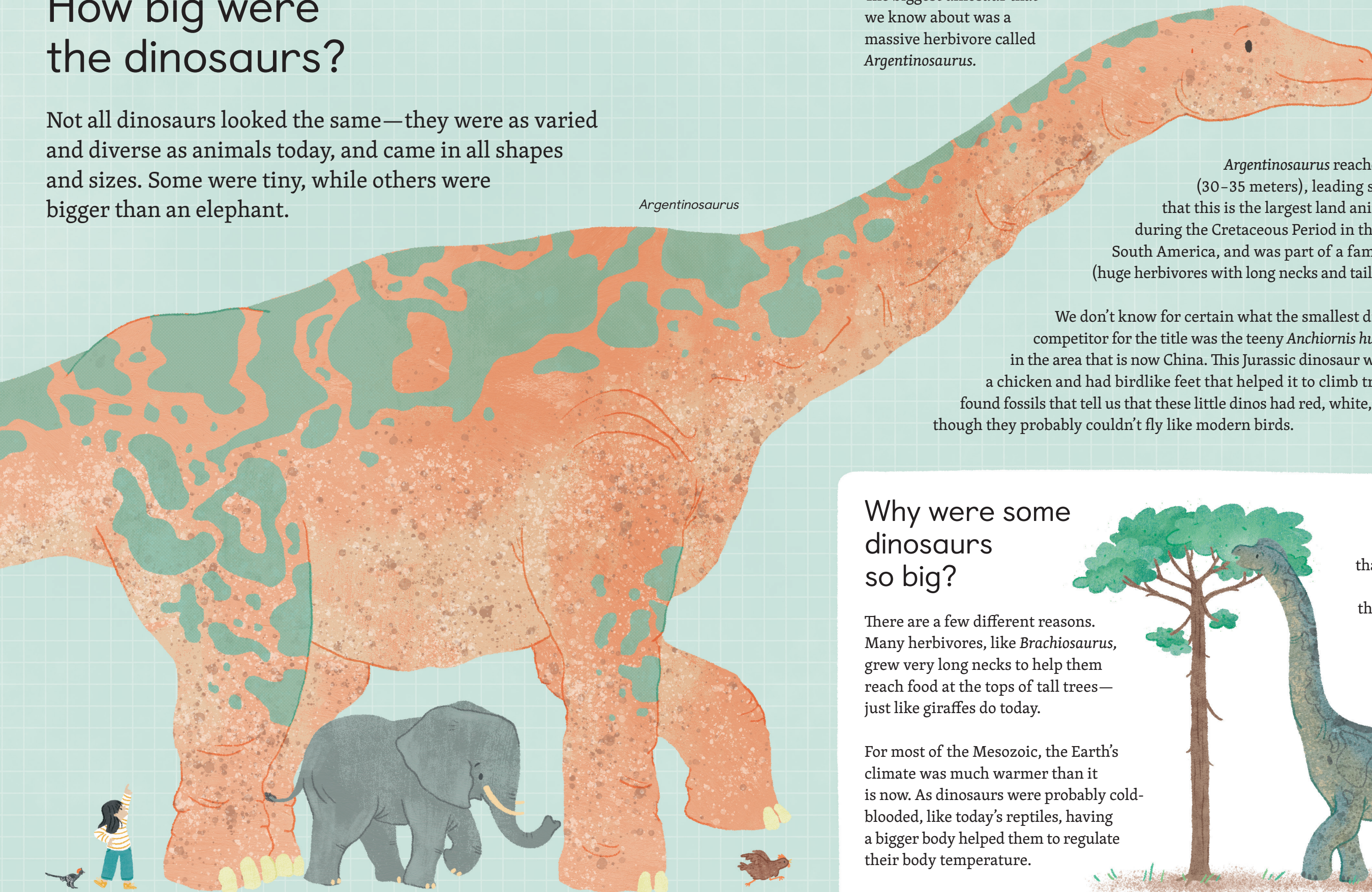
We don't know for certain what the smallest dinosaur was, but one competitor for the title was the teeny *Anchiornis huxleyi*, which was found in the area that is now China. This Jurassic dinosaur was about the size of a chicken and had birdlike feet that helped it to climb trees. Scientists have found fossils that tell us that these little dinos had red, white, and black feathers, though they probably couldn't fly like modern birds.

Why were some dinosaurs so big?

There are a few different reasons. Many herbivores, like *Brachiosaurus*, grew very long necks to help them reach food at the tops of tall trees—just like giraffes do today.

For most of the Mesozoic, the Earth's climate was much warmer than it is now. As dinosaurs were probably cold-blooded, like today's reptiles, having a bigger body helped them to regulate their body temperature.

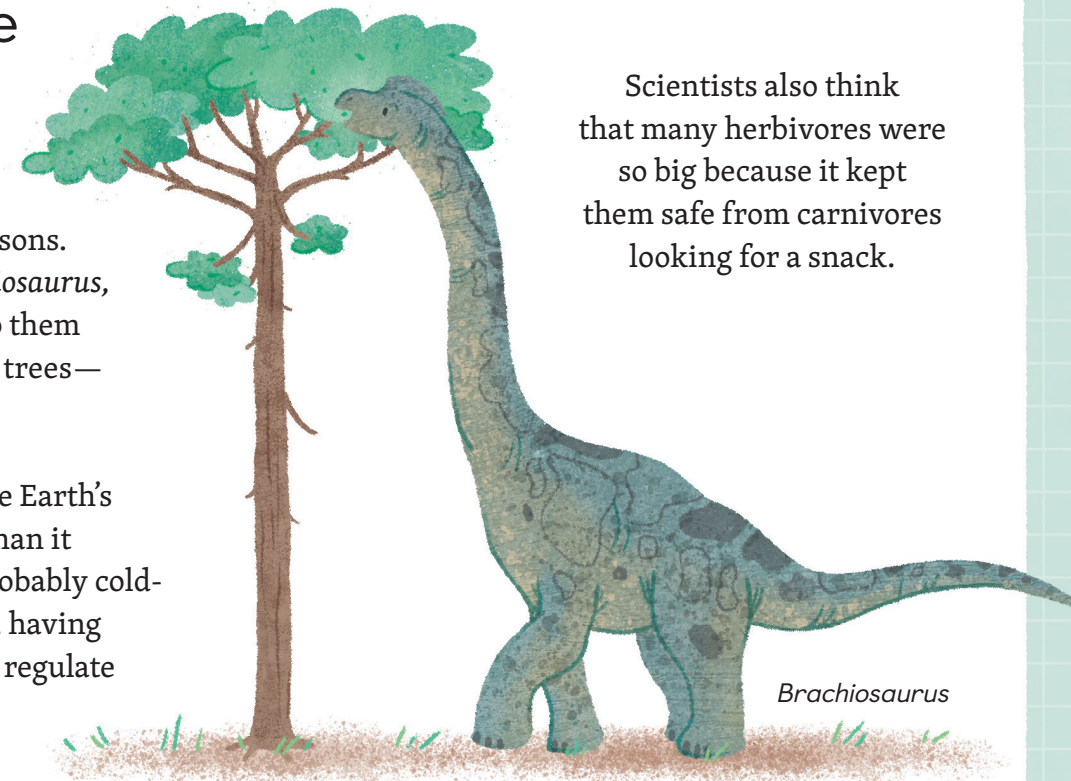
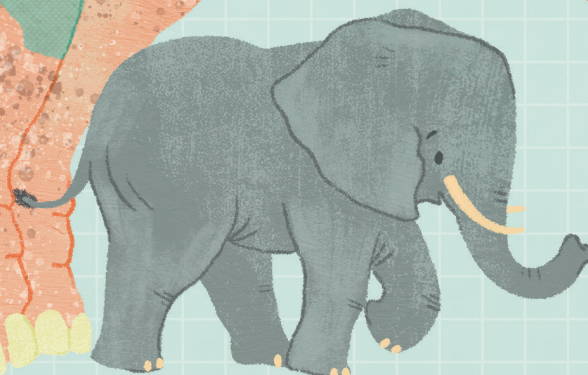
Scientists also think that many herbivores were so big because it kept them safe from carnivores looking for a snack.



Argentinosaurus



Anchiornis huxleyi



Brachiosaurus