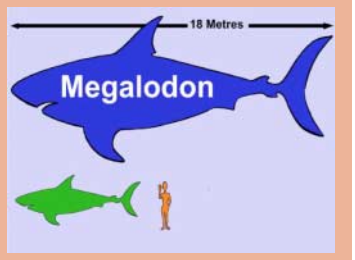
Prehistoric Super-Shark

Imagine a Great White Shark as long as a single-decker bus!

That was the prehistoric shark Carcharadon megalodon - the biggest predatory fish that ever lived. Megalodon is thought to have lived as long as 18 million years ago and to have become extinct during the Pleistocene epoch, some 1.5 million years ago. Scientists believe that Megalodon became extinct due to an abrupt cooling of the Earth's climate, together with changing ocean circulation and shortage of food, which are also thought to have brought about the extinction of another large-bodied marine predator Basilosaurus (seen right battling with Megalodon) at around the same time.
"Megalodon" (which means 'big teeth') could grow up to 18 metres long - three times longer than today's Great White Shark (shown left in green) and weighed up to 70 metric tonnes. It is likely to have fed on prehistoric whales.

The probable size of Megalodon has been estimated from the size of fossil teeth at around 47 metric tonnes.
Teeth from this ancient shark have been found all over the world - from Europe, North America, India and Japan in the north, to South America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in the south.



Smart Sharks?

Sharks are far more than the dumb "eating machines" shown in books and films, recent studies have indicated that many shark species possess powerful problem-solving skills, similar to dolphins and whales. Indeed their brain-mass-to-body-mass ratio is similar to those of mammals and other higher vertebrate species.
Whale biologist Peter Best reported as many as seven White Sharks apparently working in concert to move the carcass of a partially beached Pygmy Right Whale (*Caprea marginata*) into deeper water in 1987 at Smitswinkle Bay, South Africa to make it easier to eat.
Sharks have even been known to engage in play (a trait also observed in dolphins and monkeys). Porbeagle sharks have been seen repeatedly rolling in seaweed and have even been observed chasing a playmate trailing a piece behind them.

Captain Cockle's Log

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