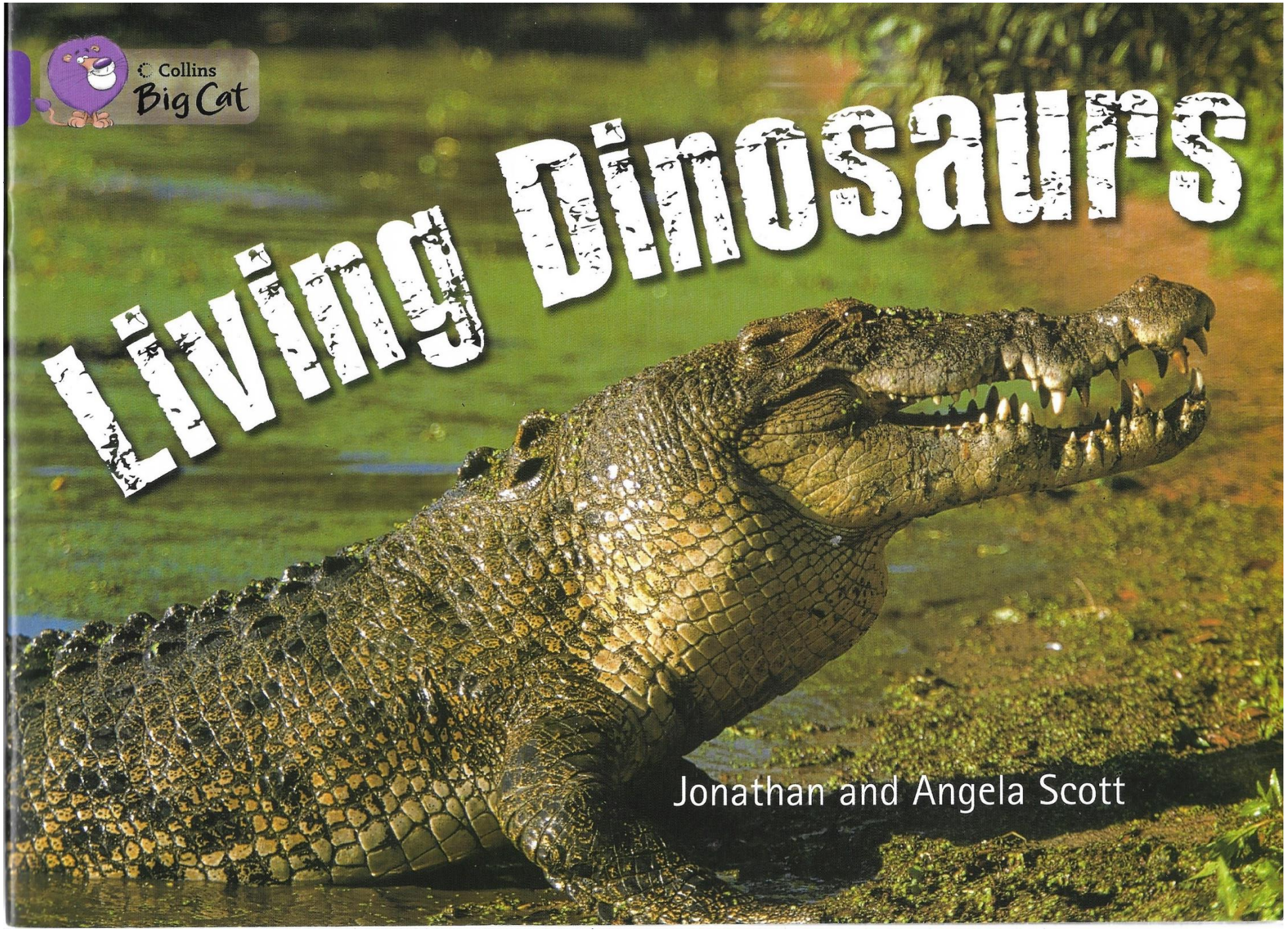
Collins
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Living Dinosaurs
Jonathan and Angela Scott

# Living Dinosaurs

Written and photographed by
Jonathan and Angela Scott

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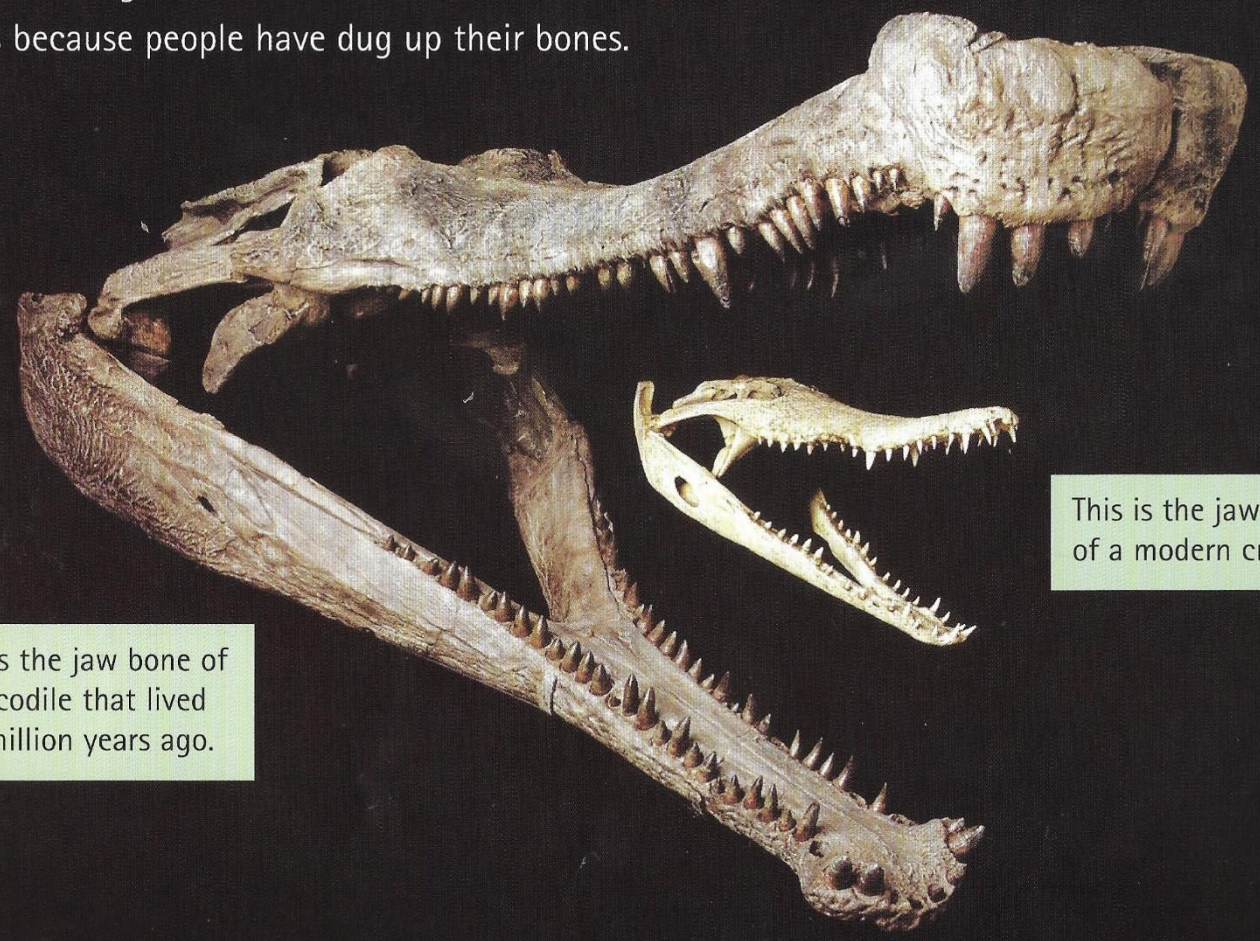
# What are living dinosaurs?

Crocodiles and lizards have been living on Earth for millions of years. They were living at the same time as the dinosaurs. We know this because people have dug up their bones.

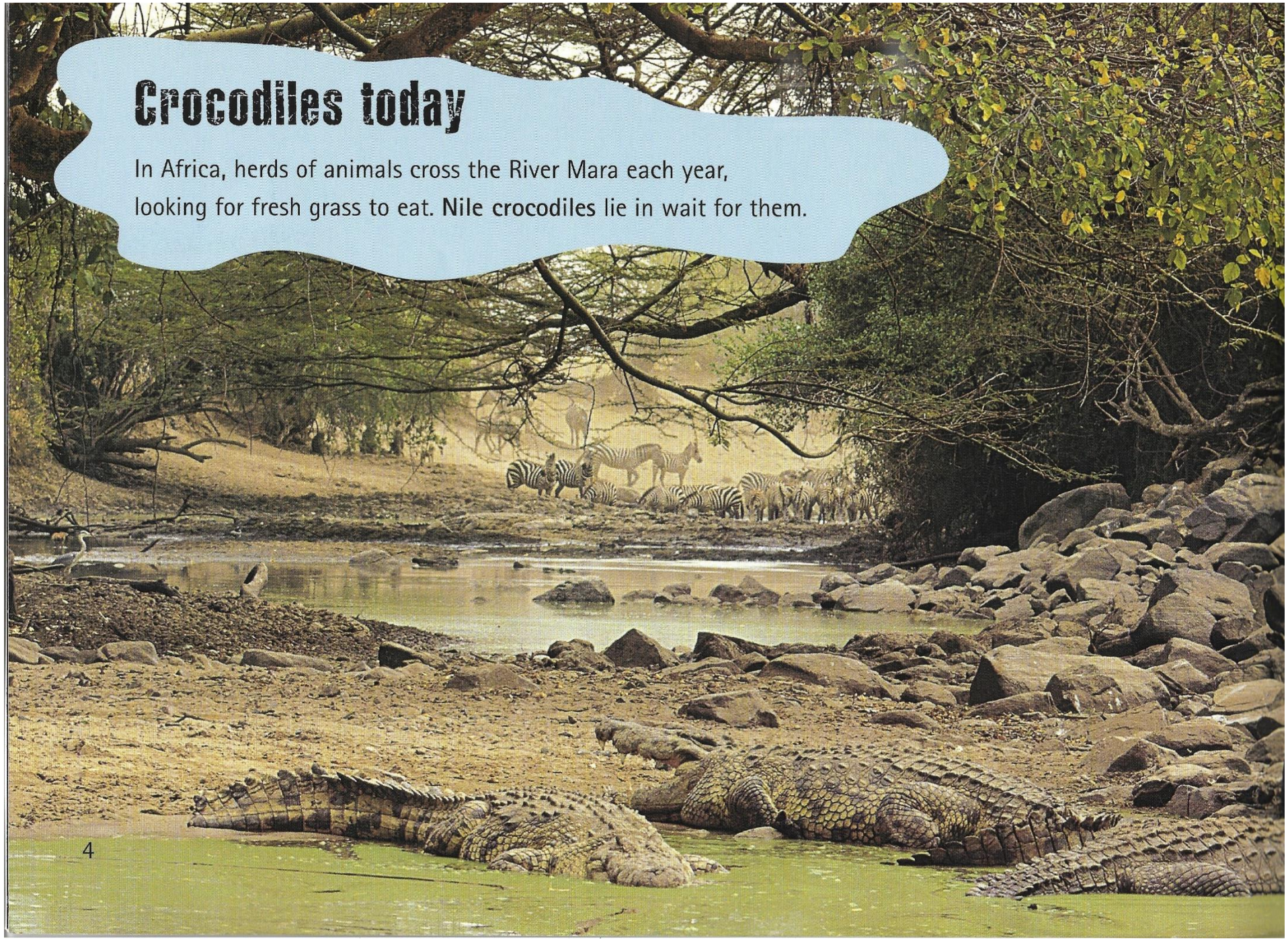


This is the jaw bone of a modern crocodile.

This is the jaw bone of a crocodile that lived 110 million years ago.

A Nile crocodile chases its prey.

One of the reasons crocodiles and lizards have survived so long is that they are good hunters and **scavengers.**

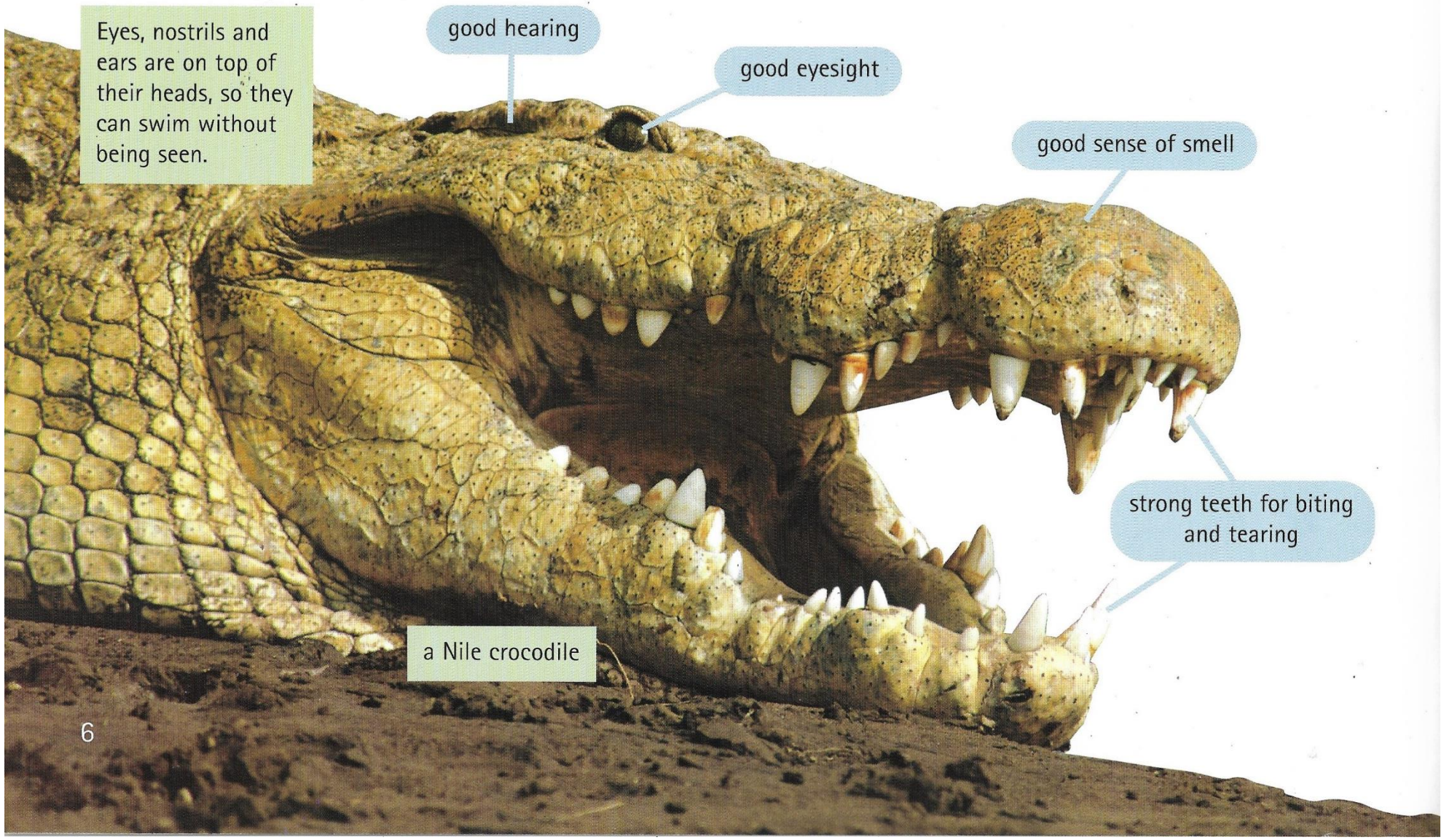


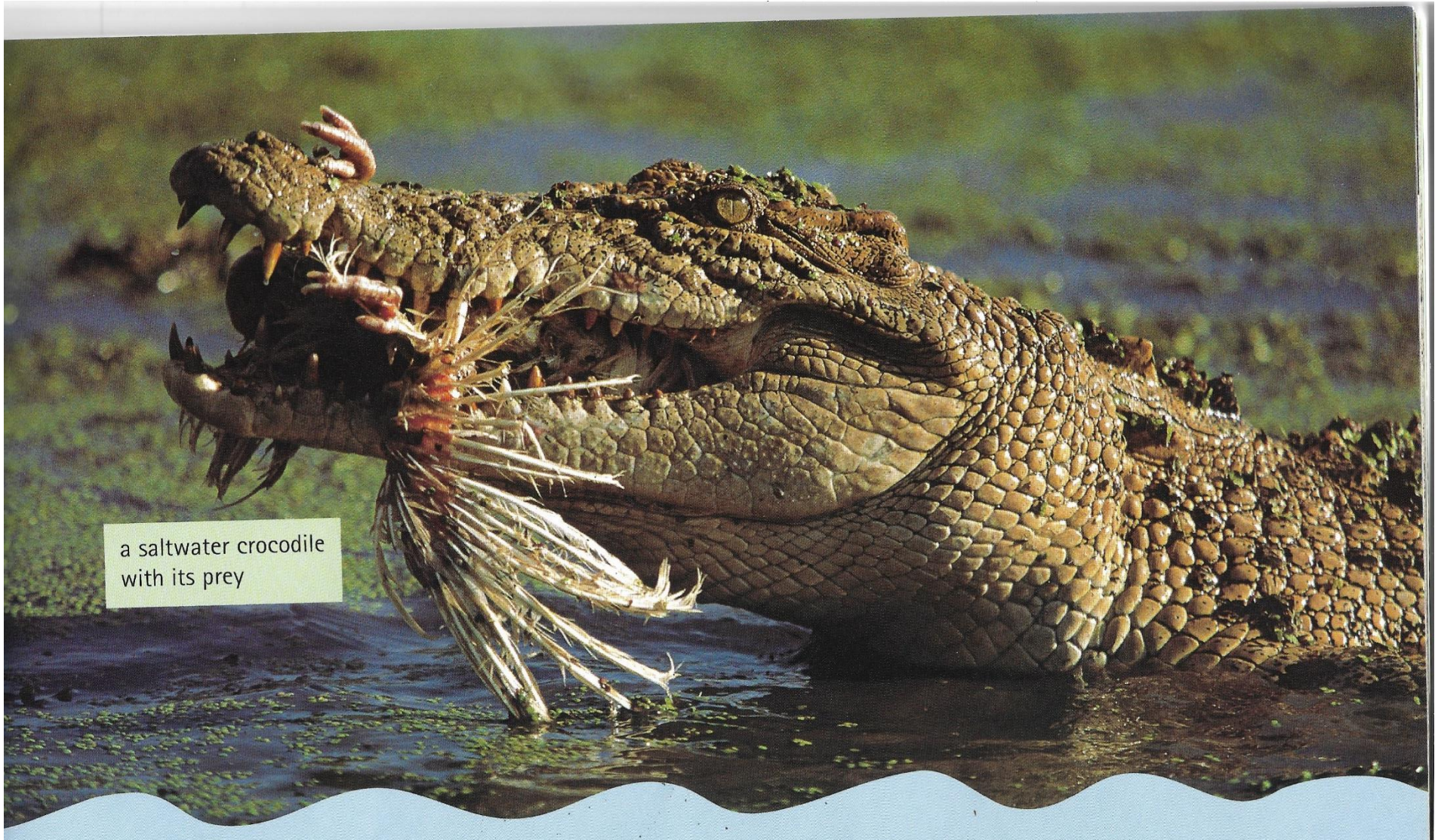
# Crocodiles today

In Africa, herds of animals cross the River Mara each year, looking for fresh grass to eat. **Nile crocodiles** lie in wait for them.

Large crocodiles only need a few big meals a year. The rest of the time they mostly eat fish. Some crocodiles lie waiting for many months until an unlucky animal tries to cross the river.

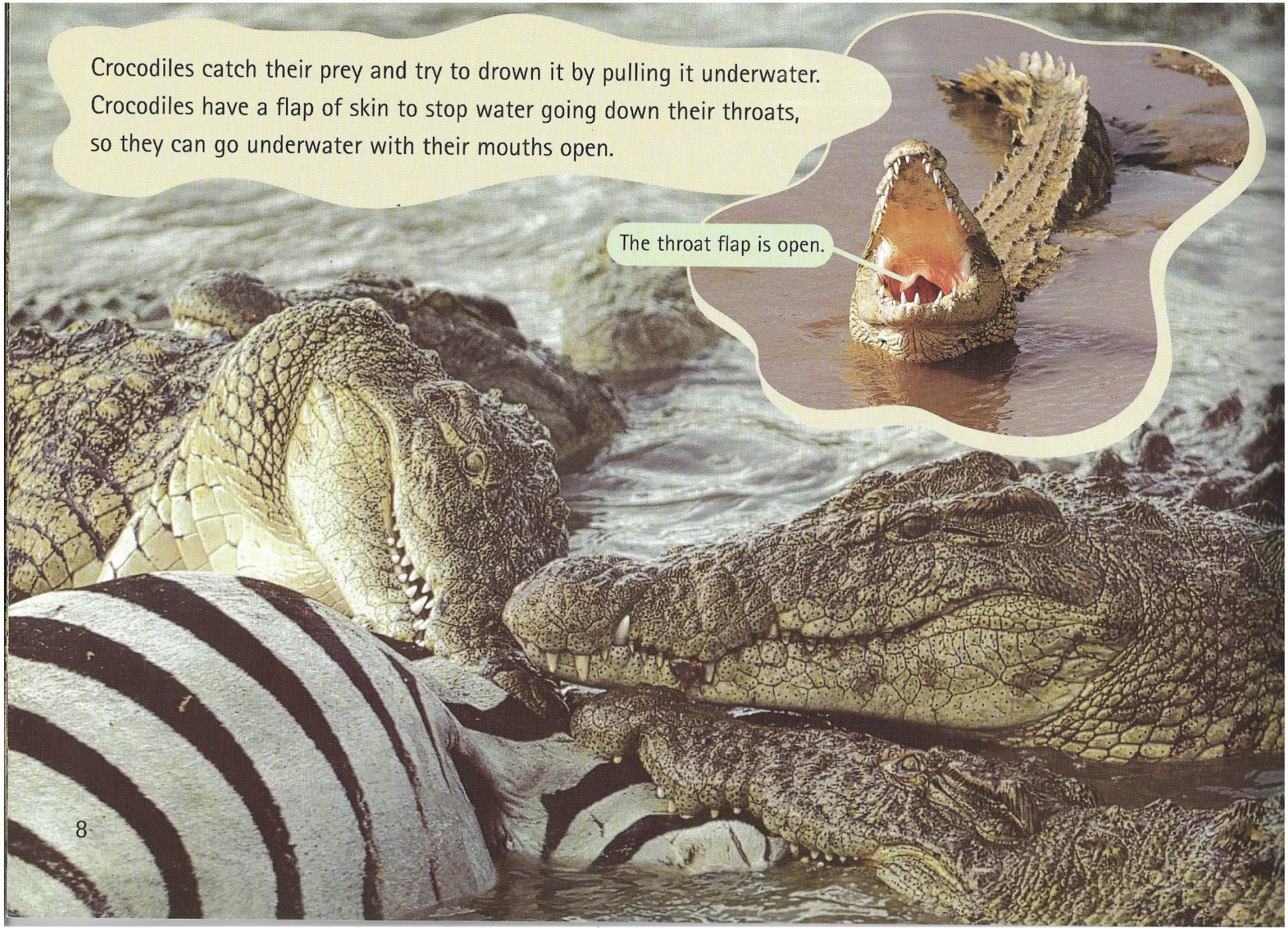
Crocodiles are some of the best hunters in the world. They are good at sneaking up on their **prey**.





a saltwater crocodile with its prey

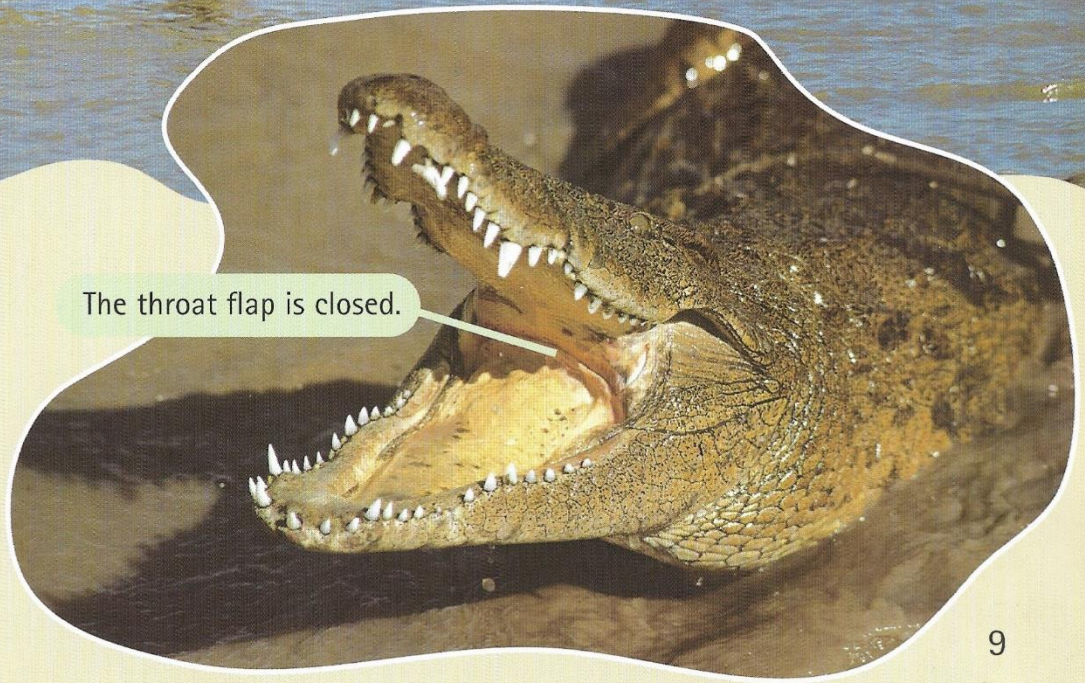
Crocodiles grab their prey with their powerful jaws.
They can snap their jaws shut with enough power to crush a car door.


Crocodiles catch their prey and try to drown it by pulling it underwater. Crocodiles have a flap of skin to stop water going down their throats, so they can go underwater with their mouths open.
The throat flap is open.

A saltwater crocodile smashes its prey against the water, to break it into smaller pieces.

Crocodiles can grow up to seven metres long and live for up to 80 years.

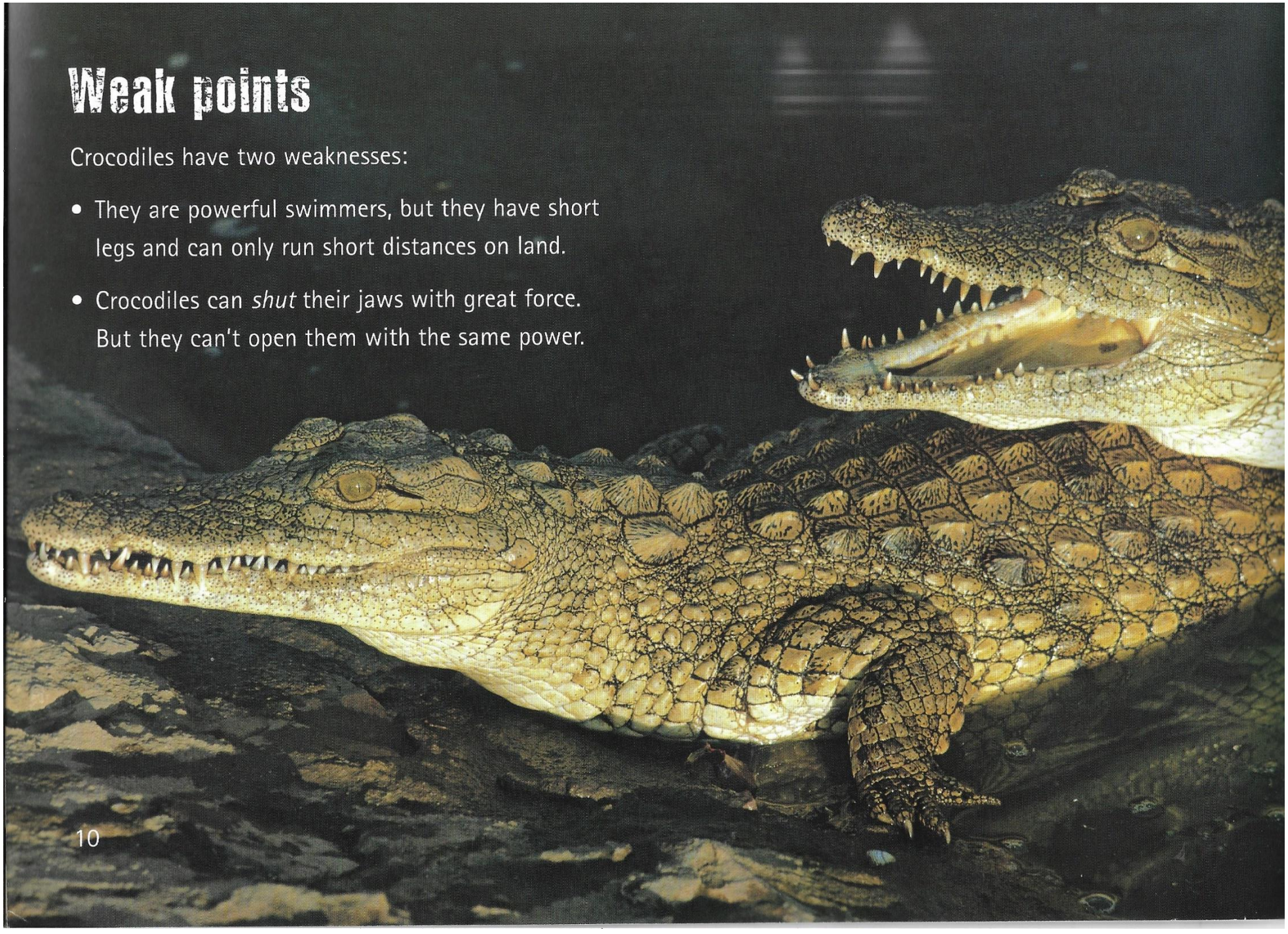
Nile crocodiles have 66 to 68 teeth and if one gets broken, another grows in its place.



# Weak points

Crocodiles have two weaknesses:

- They are powerful swimmers, but they have short legs and can only run short distances on land.
- Crocodiles can *shut* their jaws with great force. But they can't open them with the same power.



# Crocodiles in danger

There are 23 different kinds of crocodile and alligator in the world today but some are in danger of dying out. This is because towns and cities are built where crocodiles live, and people kill them because they are afraid of them and because their skins are worth a lot of money. People are now trying to protect them and their numbers are increasing, although some kinds of crocodile may still disappear forever.

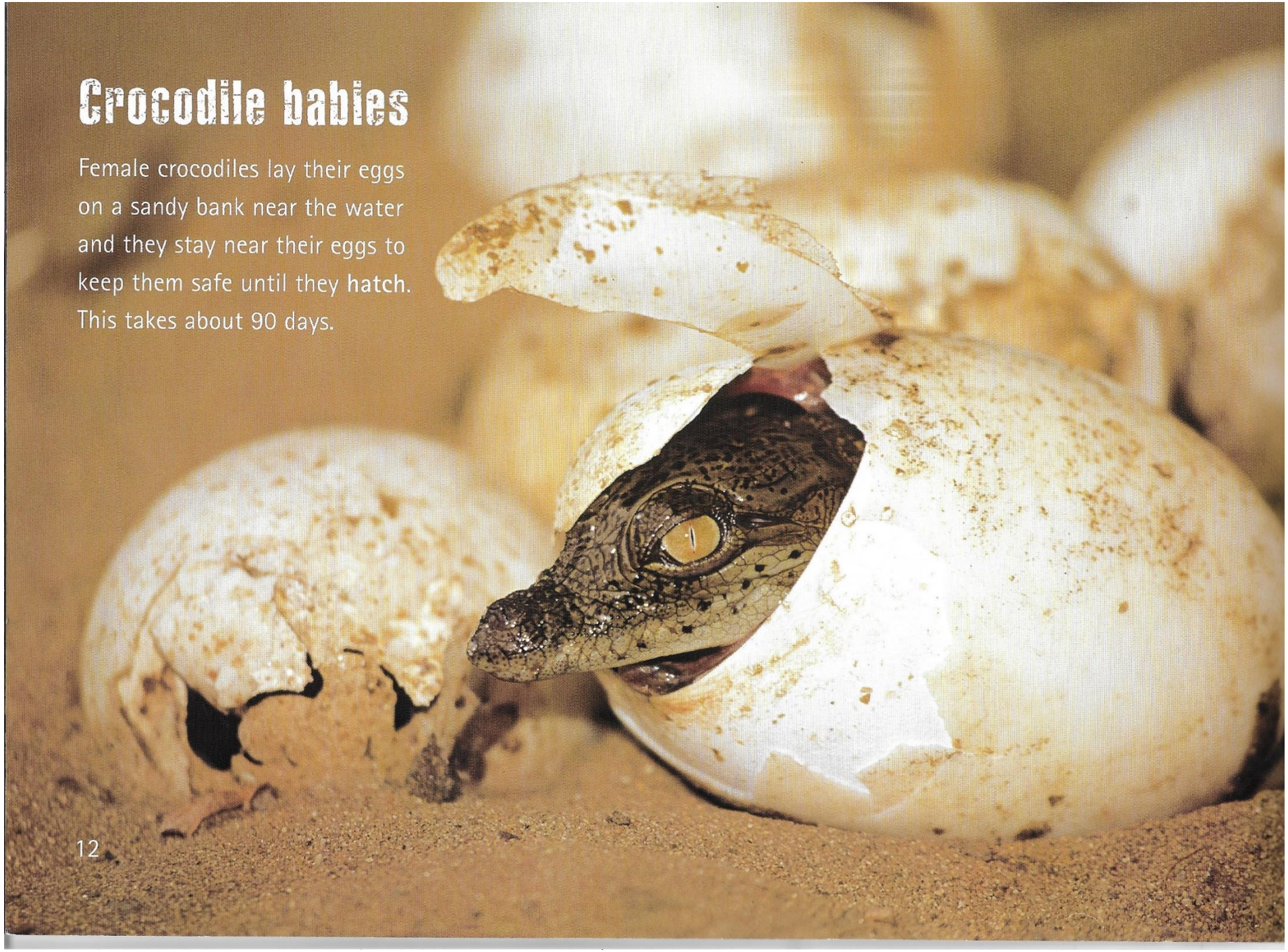
a crocodile-skin handbag

Crocodiles are also grown on 'farms' for their meat and skins. This keeps some species alive - but they are not living in the wild.

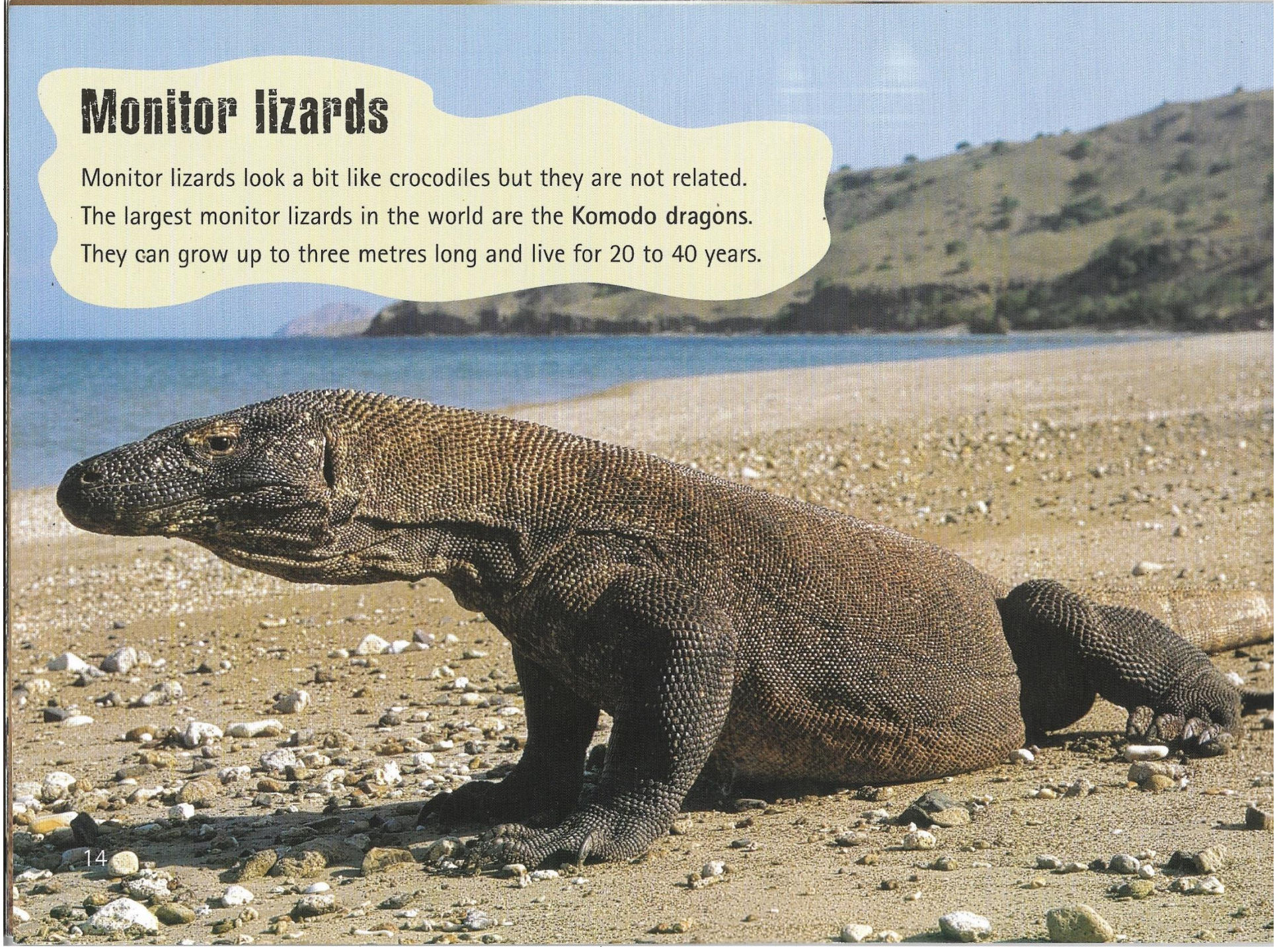
a crocodile farm

# Crocodile babies

Female crocodiles lay their eggs on a sandy bank near the water and they stay near their eggs to keep them safe until they **hatch**. This takes about 90 days.



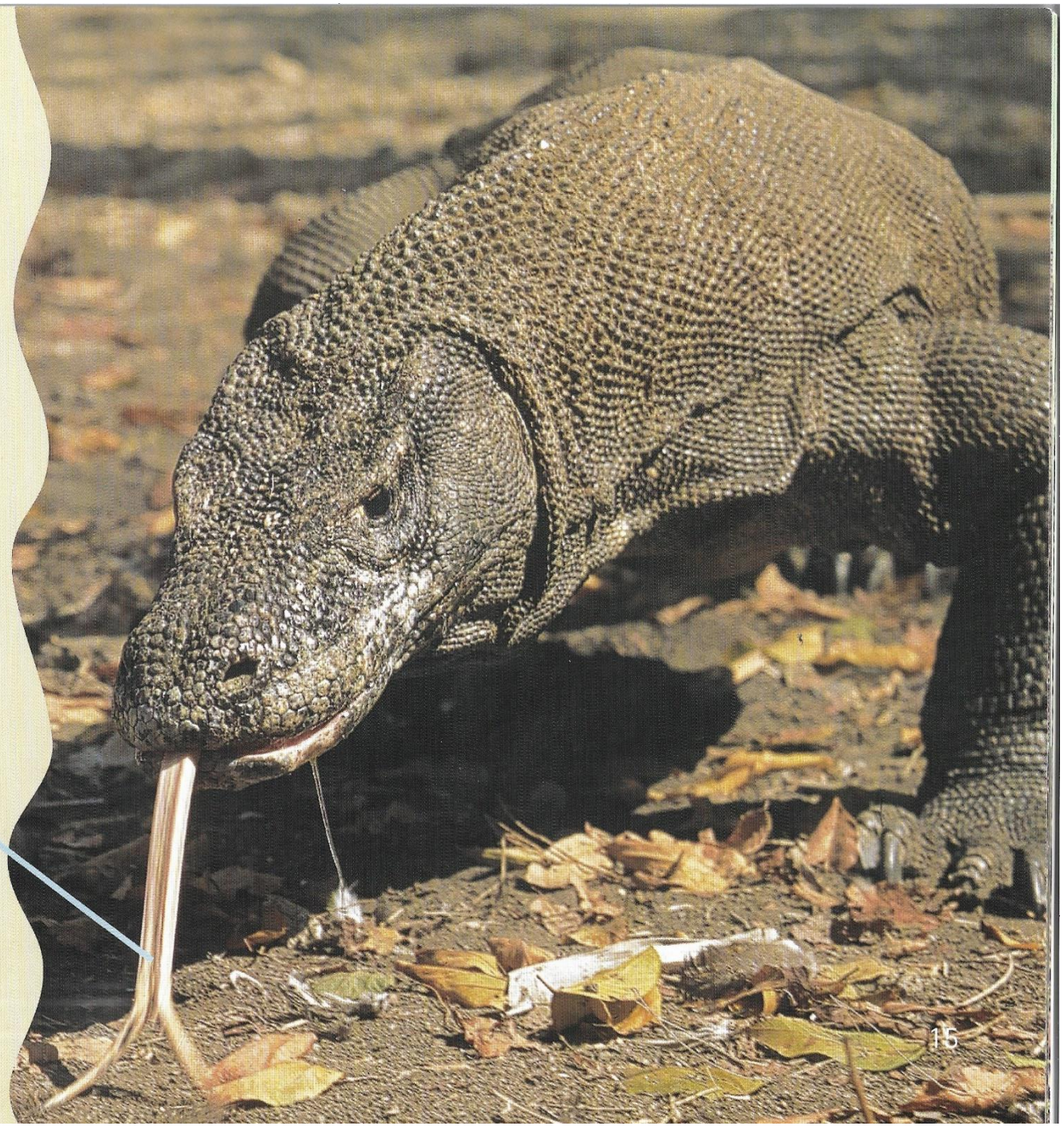
When the baby crocodiles are ready to hatch out of the eggs, they make a squeaky sound to warn their mother to take care of them. They are now in great danger and many will be eaten by other animals, such as **monitor lizards**, before she can carry them safely to the water.

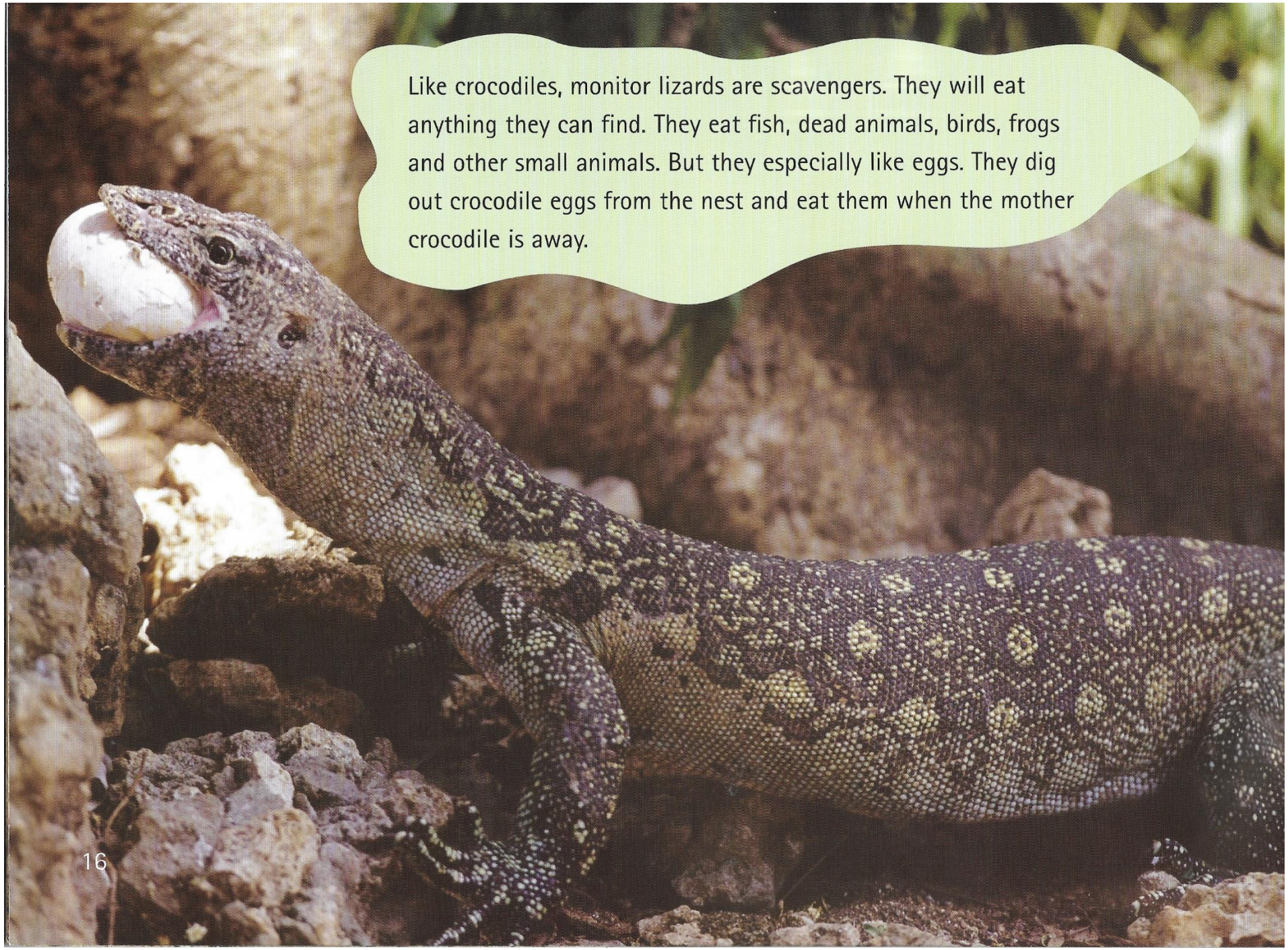


# Monitor lizards

Monitor lizards look a bit like crocodiles but they are not related. The largest monitor lizards in the world are the **Komodo dragons**. They can grow up to three metres long and live for 20 to 40 years.

They like to hide and then rush at their prey and bite it with their powerful jaws. Their mouths contain poison and even if their prey escapes, it will often die later from blood poisoning. Crocodiles will sometimes attack humans, but Komodo dragons will hardly ever do so.



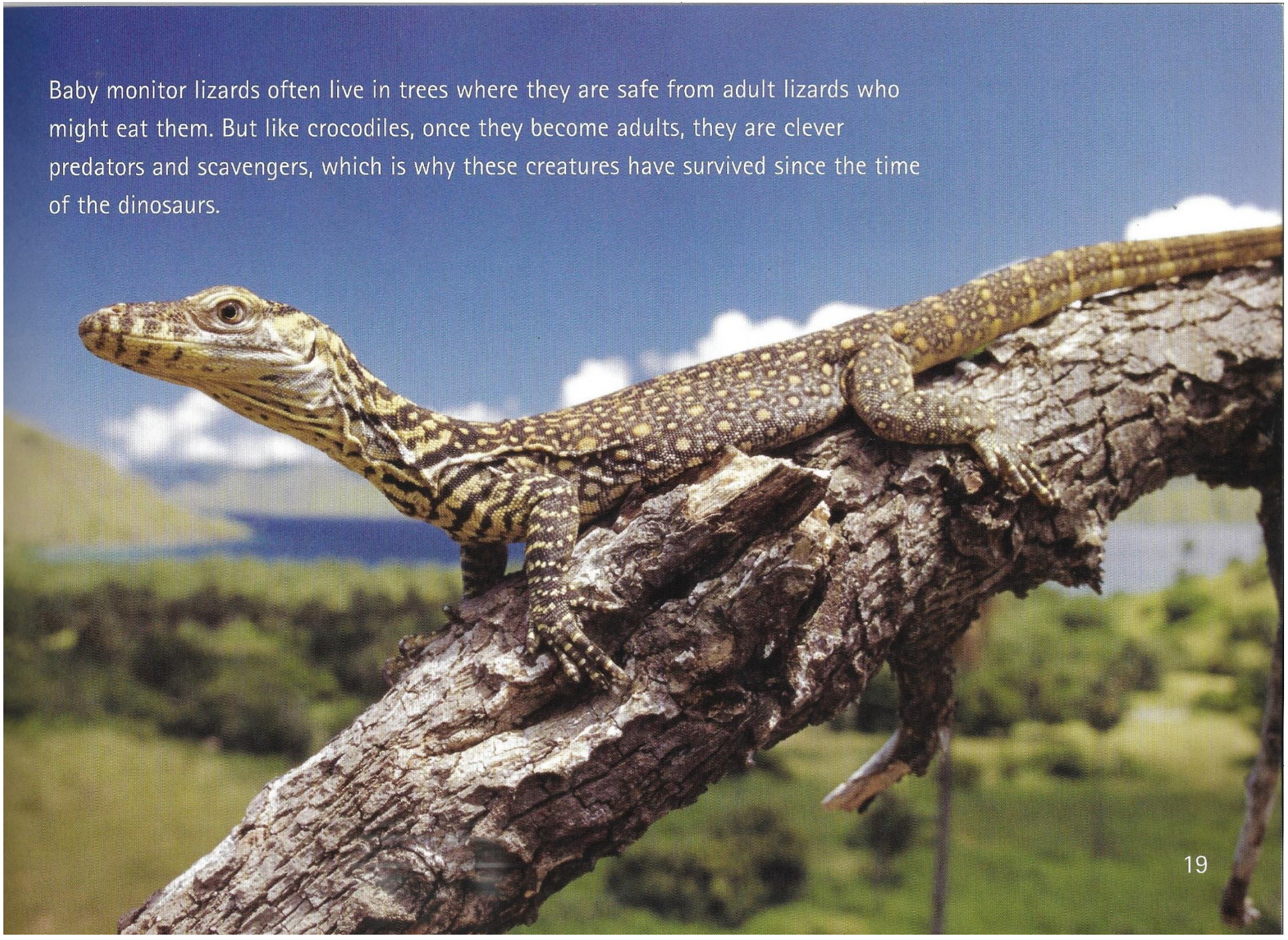


Like crocodiles, monitor lizards are scavengers. They will eat anything they can find. They eat fish, dead animals, birds, frogs and other small animals. But they especially like eggs. They dig out crocodile eggs from the nest and eat them when the mother crocodile is away.

There are many different kinds of monitor lizard.
Some are as small as 25cm long.

# Monitor lizard babies

Baby monitor lizards have a special egg tooth which they use to chip their way out of their eggs. Crocodiles have one too. Mother crocodiles look after their baby hatchlings, but baby monitor lizards have to look after themselves.



Baby monitor lizards often live in trees where they are safe from adult lizards who might eat them. But like crocodiles, once they become adults, they are clever predators and scavengers, which is why these creatures have survived since the time of the dinosaurs.

# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **alligator** | a relative of the crocodile that lives in North and South America |
| **hatch** | break out of an egg |
| **Komodo dragons** | a kind of monitor lizard |
| **monitor lizards** | lizards that look like crocodiles but are not related to them |
| **Nile crocodiles** | a kind of crocodile, named after a big river in Africa |
| **prey** | animals hunted for food by meat-eaters like crocodiles |
| **saltwater crocodile** | the largest type of crocodile in the world, able to live in both fresh water and seawater |
| **scavengers** | animals which eat food left by other animals or by people |

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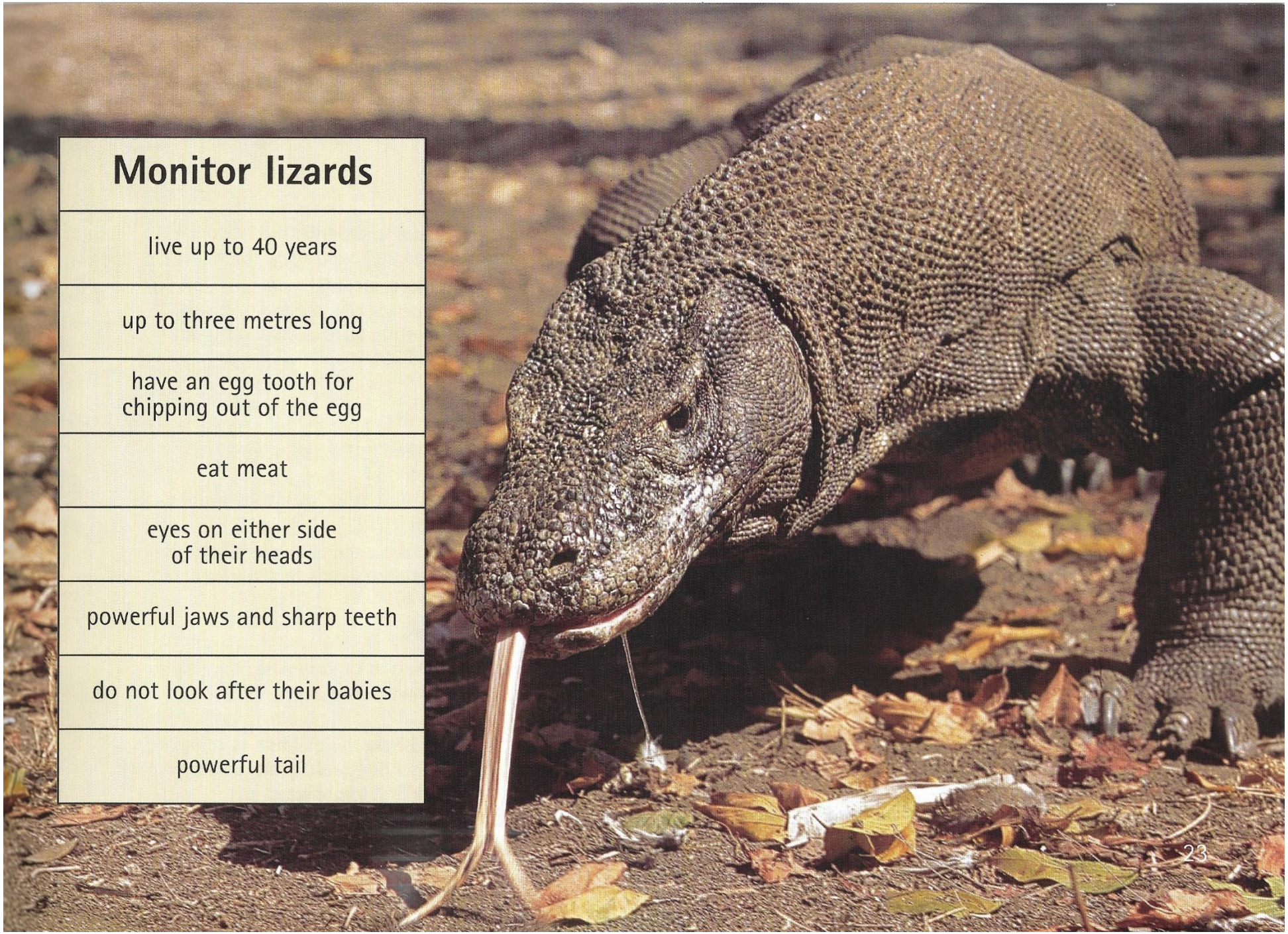
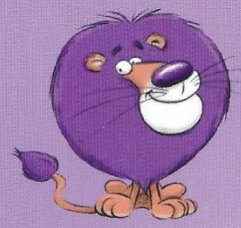
# Fact chart

| Crocodiles |
| --- |
| live up to 80 years |
| up to seven metres long |
| have an egg tooth for chipping out of the egg |
| eat meat |
| eyes on top of their heads |
| powerful jaws and sharp teeth |
| look after their babies |
| powerful tail |



## Monitor lizards

| |
|---|
| live up to 40 years |
| up to three metres long |
| have an egg tooth for chipping out of the egg |
| eat meat |
| eyes on either side of their heads |
| powerful jaws and sharp teeth |
| do not look after their babies |
| powerful tail |



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# Living Dinosaurs

Crocodiles and lizards were on Earth at the time of the dinosaurs, and are still some of the best hunters in the world.

A non-chronological report

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