



## A Candidate For A Darwin Award: A 370Ma Placoderm

By Oliver Kneivt | March 14th 2011 01:40 PM | [Print](#) | [E-mail](#)

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Everyone's heard of the Darwin Awards, right? It's where some poor soul dies in such a monumentally stupid way that it can be considered that they have done the human gene pool a great favour by inadvertently altruistically killing themselves and removing their genes. Well, I have a candidate from the fossil record; a late famennian placoderm, that definitely deserves such an accolade.

Firstly though, a quick primer on placoderms. In short, they were big armoured predatory fishes that were widespread in the Devonian. But, by big, I mean really big. Some of these dudes were as big as a double decker bus and would have pretty

happily [chomped through a car like it was a ham sandwich.](#)



I love this reconstruction!

Which makes our guy's plight all the more hilarious. Placoderms eat all sorts of things and have even been found to (apparently successfully) swallow things up to half their own body size, but our candidate seems to have bitten off more than he could chew (the pun was very much intentional, by the way!).

For his tea, our placoderm eyed up a very tasty looking ctenacanth shark of over 6 foot in length. Now, considering that our hero was only barely 10 feet himself, he had set his sights high. But, rather than sensibly moving on and finding some more suitably sized prey, we can only assume that our placoderm was very hungry indeed, for his greed got the better of him and he attempted to have a feast of a dinner on the shark.

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Our hero closed on the shark, opened his fearsome jaws wide, and clamped them shut round the middle two thirds of the shark's body - no easy task considering the size of the prey.

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