

DAVID AARON



Sabre Cat 'Nimravidae' Skeleton

Oligocene, circa 33.7 to 23.8 million years ago

White River Formation, USA

Fossilised Bone

H: 49cm x W: 20cm x L: 125 cm

Nimravidae, commonly known as the Sabre Cat, although different to the scientifically known 'Sabre-toothed Cat' of the family Felidae, occupied a crucial niche in the carnivorous mammalian ecosystem during the Eocene (55.8 million to 33.9 million years ago), Oligocene (33.9 million to 23 million years ago) and Miocene (23 million to 5.3 million years ago) epochs. Fossils can be found in areas of North America and Eurasia, and it is believed their main habitats were the vast ranging forests of mainland's.

Visually the skeleton structure suggests that they would have looked like a large cat, some important differences exist between the Nimravidae family and the Felidae (Feline) family to which modern cats belong. Members of the Nimravid family (like *Hoplophoneus*, *Dinictus*, and *Pogonodon*) all belonged to the order Carnivora.

Nimravidae were hypercarnivorous, eating entirely meat for their whole diet. Using their characteristic long, sharp teeth, Nimravidae would hunt for their food, and some (like *Hoplophoneus*) were likely solitary ambush predators. They were fairly large, ranging from the size of a mountain lion to that of a jaguar. This meant that their prey could be fairly large the most likely prey for Nimravids at this time ranged from sheep-sized oreodonts, small horses and small rhinocerotids.

The skull of Nimravidae, predominantly characterised by its elongated, saber-like maxillary canines, exhibits unique cranial and dental adaptations. Although like Felids, the nimravids exhibit diverse size and bone structures, meaning that some were the size of a large house cat, while other variations were

similar today's lions and tigers.

The robust nature of the limb bones suggests powerful musculature, indicative of a formidable predatory lifestyle. Cranial analysis shows a pronounced sagittal crest (the ridge of bone running lengthwise along the midline of the top of the skull), possibly serving as an attachment site for strong jaw muscles, emphasizing its specialised biting capabilities.

This mounted specimen at 70 (+/-) complete, is composed from one individual and in beautiful preservation, as seen by the lack of distortion of the bones and the fine texture of the bones, which display very little erosion. The specimen is articulated in a relaxed animated walking pose.