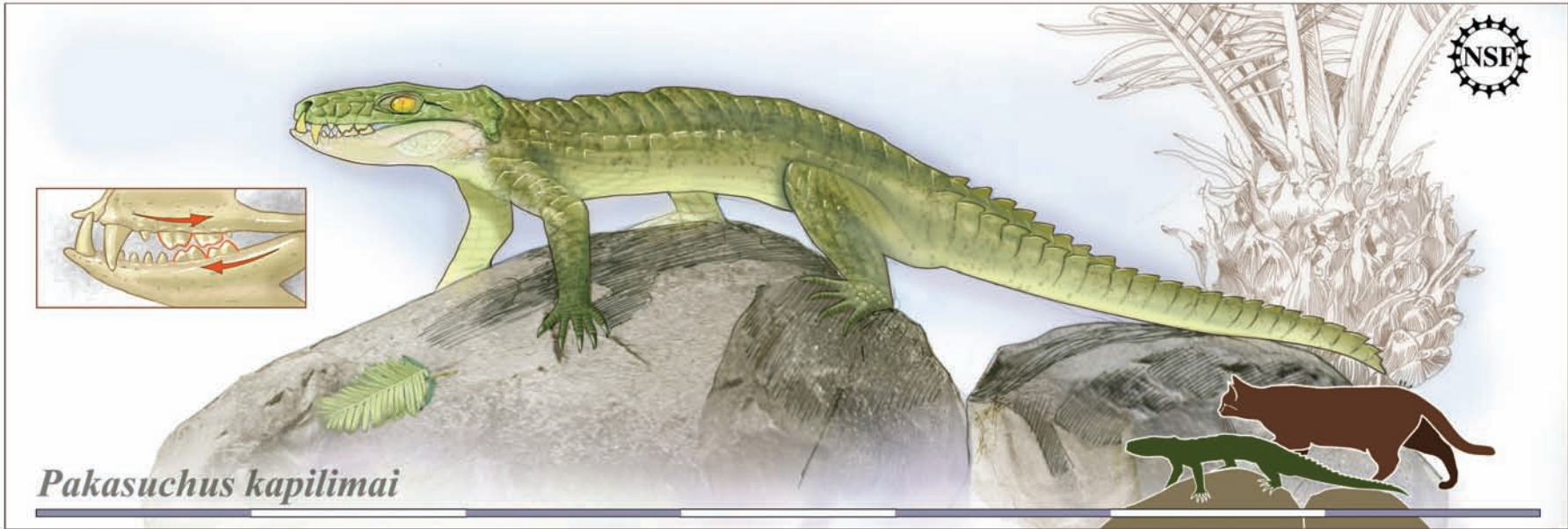


These Crocs Were Made for Chewing?



Newly discovered, ancient crocodile was mammal-like, from its grinding molars to its skinny legs

Paleontologists scouring a river bank in Tanzania have unearthed a previously unknown crocodile from 105 million-year-old, middle-Cretaceous rock in the Great East African Rift System.

Researchers have dubbed the new animal *Pakasuchus kapilimai*. Paka is Ki-Swahili for cat, in reference to the animal's short, low skull with slicing, molar-like teeth, and souchos is from the ancient Greek for crocodile.

The discovery of a relatively lanky, cat-sized animal with mammal-like teeth and a land-based lifestyle supports a growing consensus that crocodiles were once far more diverse than they are today. The unusual dentition is the most revealing difference. The pivotal features distinguishing *Pakasuchus* from other crocodylians of the time, and since, is the complexity and differentiation in the teeth.

The high degree of fit between the upper and lower rear teeth suggest an ability to process food in a manner that current crocodylians, with their bite and swallow tactics, lack--yet it is an ability virtually all mammals possess.

Credit: Image - Zina Deretsky, National Science Foundation
Writing - Josh Chamot, National Science Foundation
For more information on Crocs see:
<http://www.nsf.gov/ancientcroc>

