

Late Triassic: New Blood



Introduction

This is a role-playing game about the Later Triassic. Most of the Triassic is very dry and rain is seasonal. The rainy season is unpredictable so droughts are common and a major threat. Dinosaurs are slowly replacing dicynodonts and archosaurs that dominated the first part of the Triassic. The dry climate favors Conifers and cycadophytes are common plants. They are slow growing and taller than earlier plants. Two to six gamers will play medium sized meat eating dinosaur *Coelophysis*. A Game Master (GM) will run the game, tracking the turns playing the revealed food sources.

Late Triassic Scenario

The Late Triassic is when the first dinosaurs appeared. They still share the world with their relatives the archosaurs, along with cynodonts and dicynodonts, animals related to mammals.

Archosaurs are related to dinosaurs and modern crocodiles. They are still the large carnivores and were ambush predators like today's Komodo dragons and large crocodiles. Animals like ***Postosuchus*** and its relatives were four-footed land crocs and the top predators. They disappear at the end of the Triassic. Aetosaurs are plant-eating archosaurs built to feed low on the ground. They are medium-size animals that are armored like the ankylosurs that come later. There were several different aetosaurs, ***Desmatosuchus*** and ***Paratypothorax***, and probably did not live in groups. They disappear by the end of the Triassic.

Cynodonts are the small meat-eaters and the ancestors of mammals. They get smaller and stay small until the dinosaurs die out. We know them mostly from their teeth and the animals in the game are based on the Early Triassic ***Thrinaxodon***.

Placerias were the last of the dicynodonts. They were medium-size animals with tusks that could dig up roots and tubers. We think they could have lived in herds. They were the most important animals for millions of years but are now in decline and disappear at the end of the Triassic.

The big plant-eaters are dinosaurs, the sauropodomorph like ***Plateosaurus***. They are big four-footed animals with long necks and small heads. They remain the most common large herbivores until the middle Jurassic when their cousins, the even bigger sauropods, take over. They would have laid many eggs each year

and we think the size difference made it unlikely they gave much care to their young. Young and smaller prosauropods would have been the small herbivores.

Coelophysids were small- to medium-sized dinosaurs that were wide spread in the Late Triassic and Early Jurassic. The basic theropod body plan, long neck, long tail and bipedal, could still be found until the end of the Cretaceous. Animals like **Coelophysis**, **Lilensternus**, **Podokesaurus**, and **Halticosaurus** were close relatives and looked very similar.

The lesson should teach what plants and animals lived in the Late Triassic and how the weather patterns affected animal behavior.

Set Up

The Game Master (GM) will set up the hex play mat. Set up the terrain with conifers and cycadophytes that would be found near water for forest, use ferns, and cycads for scrub. The remainder is open terrain or river/lake with ferns/cycads/horse tails. Establish game order by having each player roll a dice. High roll is first and proceed clockwise. Place the food resource markers around table 2 x the number of players. Place them in a variety of terrain types.

Each player gets 1 **Coelophysis** figure and 6 life sticks. The player is dead when he runs out of sticks. A player may place the figure on any hex on the board not occupied by another player. Games end when only 1 player is left or time runs out. The player with most life wins.

Set time limit: Recommended 30 – 60 minutes.

Turn Sequence

1. GM checks for dry season. Roll 1 D6 + 1 each turn. 8 = Dry season.
2. Player takes turn: Do A-D, then next player's turn until all have a turn.
 - A. GM checks for ambush for forest or river/lake; roll 1 D6 on 5 or 6 LC Player.
 - B. Move 6 points
 - a) Clear hex 2 points
 - b) Scrub hex 3 points
 - c) Forest hex 4 points
 - d) Water hex stop
 - C. Search hex. GM reveals results (see Search Table appendix).
 - D. Player takes action:
 - a) Run away move to adjacent hex. If carnivore, roll 1 D6 and GM roll 1 D6 -1 LC or +1 SC
 - b) Ignore remain in hex if Carnivore = or >, it will attack.
 - E. Attack (automatic combat if you move into the hex with another player).

Game Master Actions

Dry season:

- Roll 1 D6 for every resource or non player pack/herd left on the board; on 1 –3 remove.
- Dry season will last $2 + 1 \text{ D6}$ 3 – 8 turns.
- At the end of the dry season, repeat the resource distribution 2 resources per player.

Form packs:

- Dry season only, you can form a pack by moving into the same hex as another player.
- Packs break up when the rains come.
- Each turn, a different payer moves the pack.
- For combat, add 1 for each pack member; each player gets an attack.
- All kills are shared.
- Extras go to player in order of strength and through away a tie.

Dead players:

- If a player dies, you may start him over again next wet season.

Appendix: Triassic Animals

Large Carnivores (LC)

Postosuchus



It was a 10 foot long archosaur, a cousin of crocodiles and dinosaurs. It was heavily built and the top predator of its time.

Mastodontosaurus



This was an 18-foot amphibian that haunted the lakes and streams.

Rutidon



It had a crocodile-like body structure, but its nostrils were on its forehead. It was a large semi-aquatic carnivore.

Lilensternus



It was a large ceolophysid that lived in Europe, it was an 18 foot top predator.

Herrasaurus



Early dinosaur related to theropods. A lightly built bipedal carnivore with a long tail and a relatively small head. Its length is estimated at 18 feet.

Medium Carnivores (MC)



Coelophysis

A 7-foot tall dinosaur that gather in groups. Coelophysids were small- to medium-sized dinosaurs that were widespread in the Late Triassic and Early Jurassic. The basic theropod body plan could still be found until the end of the Cretaceous. *Lilensternus*, *Podokesaurus*, and *Halticosaurus* were close relatives and looked very similar.

Small Carnivores (SM)



Cynodont

The term "cynodont" refers to a broad group of extinct animals with nearly all the characteristics of mammals. They probably laid eggs and nursed their young, were at least partially if not completely warm-blooded, and covered with hair. They get smaller and more like mammals throughout the Triassic.

Large Herbivore (LH)



Melanosaurus

Sauropodomorph dinosaurs, up to 40 feet long, and traveled in herds.



Plateosaurus

Sauropodomorph dinosaur, up to 30 feet long, and traveled in herds.

Medium Herbivore (LH)

Placerias 

Dicynodont herd animals, up to 12 feet long.

Desmotosuchus 

Aetosaur armored low feeder, up to 15 feet long, solitary.

Paratypothorax 

Aetosaur armored low feeder, up to 9 feet long, solitary.

Small Herbivore (SH)

sauropodomorph young



Travel in herds.

Appendix: Search Table

GM notes and tables roll 2 D10

Terrain	Open	Mixed	Forest	Swamp/River /Lake
SH	10% 1 – 6 1 – 10	10% – 6 1 – 10	30% – 12 1 – 30	30% 2 – 12 1 – 30
MH	40% 1 – 6 11 – 50	40% 1 – 6 11 – 50	20% 1 – 3 31 – 50	30% 1 – 6 31 – 60
LH	30% 1 – 6 51 – 10	30% 1 – 3 51 – 80	30% 1 51-80	20% 1 – 6 61-80
SC	5% 1 – 2 81 – 85	5 % 1 – 6 81-85	10% 1 – 6 81-90	5% 2 – 12 81-85
MC	10% 1 – 6 86 – 95	10% 1 – 6 86 – 95	5% 1 – 3 91 – 95	5% 1 – 6 86-90
LC	5% 96 – 00	5% 96 – 00	5% 96 – 00	10% 91 – 00
Nest		X	X	
Scavenge	X			X
Accident	X (hill)			X

Read the results; in mixed you roll a 7 and 5. You go to row 3 in the mixed column. You have found a large herbivore roll D6 – 3. A roll of less than 3 is 1. You roll a 5, subtract 3, you have 2 large herbivore. Set up 2 Plateosaurus in the hex.

Note: Nests should be found in Wet season/corpses in Dry season.

Create a play mat. Either buy a vinyl hex mat or use an inexpensive plastic tablecloth. Use markers to lay out a grid with each column about the size of a CD, an even grid or alternating rows. Pick a tan or yellow color that can be painted if desired.

Use popsicle sticks to **track lives**. You need several D6 and D10.

For terrain: Plastic trees for forest, Palms for cycadoids, horse chestnuts or pinecones for cycads with palm treetops, tops from Palms for ferns, broom straw for horsetails. For easy deployment have campers create the terrain. Paint an old CD, glue plants, and then spray CD with glue and cover remainder with sand. Apply Elmer's glue or hot glue to create water where base is painted blue/green for water.