

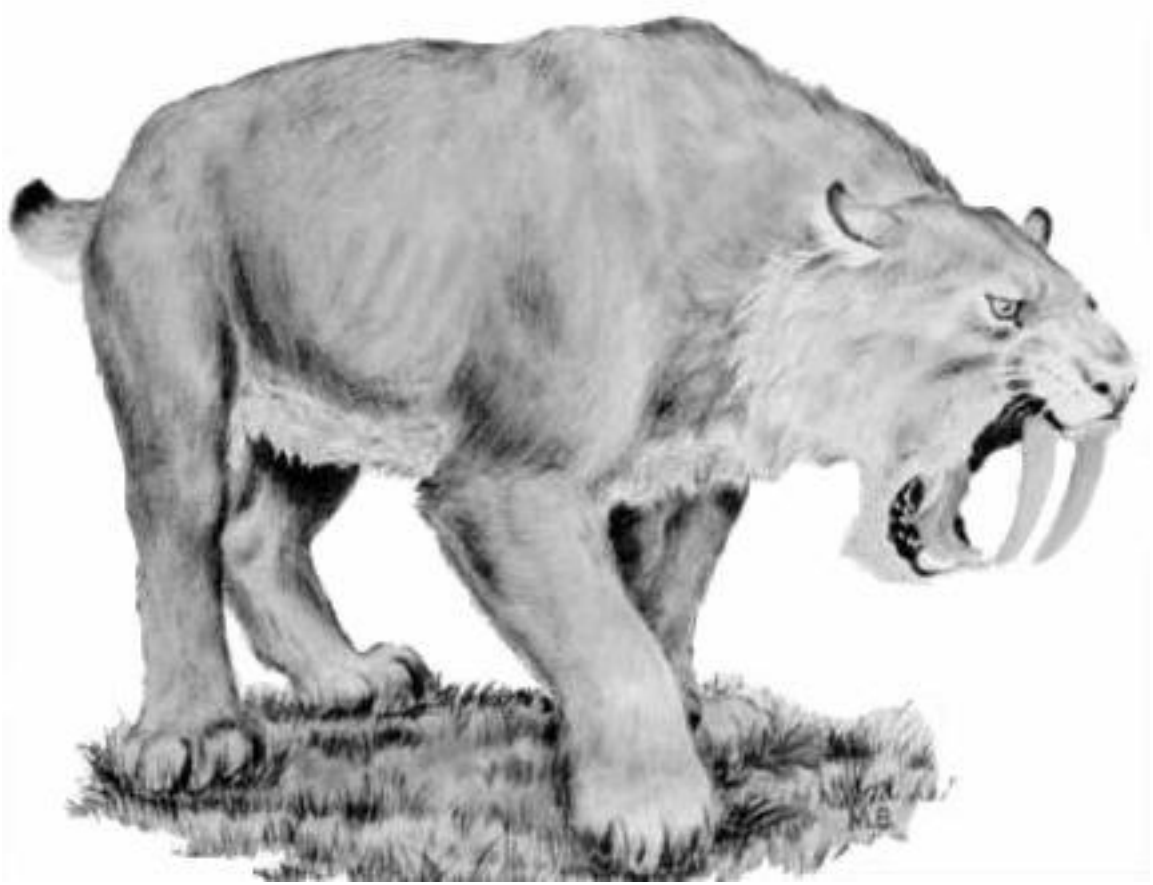
The sabretooth’s teeth

Dear children,

Have a look at this picture of a caracal. Why do you think it is showing its teeth? Yes, it is probably scared and is telling the human “don’t come any closer, I have very sharp and rather long teeth which I can use for biting you”.

Now look at this extinct cat; it’s called a sabretooth cat, and was bigger than a lion. Do you know why it’s called a sabretooth cat? Yes, its canine teeth are long like the long curved knives called sabres that humans sometimes use as weapons.





So, when this cat was scared do you think it showed its teeth just like the caracal?



Most people who have drawn the sabretooth cat seem to think so; just look at all these drawings with the sabretooth cat with its mouth wide open.





The Honey Badger and I think these artists were wrong. We don’t think the sabretooth cat would have opened its mouth when it was scared for two reasons. Can you guess the reasons?





The first reason is because the sabretooth cat probably didn’t even use these long teeth in a fight so there was no point in showing them off. Their canine teeth were so long that they were probably rather fragile and would have broken easily in a big fight with another strong animal. These cats probably rather used their long and sharp claws for fighting.

The second reason is that there was no need for the cats to open their mouths to show other animals how long their teeth were, because the teeth were so long that they stuck out of the side of the mouth. Any animal attacking a sabretooth cat would easily have seen that it had very long canine teeth sticking out of its mouth.



So, if ever you are drawing a sabretooth cat in a fight in your art class at school, remember that it makes most sense to draw the cat with a closed mouth, with its sabre-like canines sticking out of the side of the mouth. If you want to draw the cat with its mouth wide open, what do you think it could be doing? Yes, yawning!

Kind regards from the Bio-edge,

Robin

