

GLOSSARY

A

Aggregations

A group of organisms living closely together.

Anoxic

Greatly deficient in oxygen.

Anthropocene

Refers to the current geological epoch (from the Industrial revolution onwards) during which human-driven activity has a predominant influence on the climate and environment.

Anthropology

The science that deals with the origins, physical and cultural development, biological characteristics, and social customs and beliefs of humankind.

Anthropologist

An expert in, or student of, anthropology.

Archaea

A domain of single-celled microorganisms which have no cell nucleus or any other membrane-bound organelles in their cells.

B

Bacteria

A member of a large group of unicellular microorganisms which have cell walls but lack organelles and an organized nucleus, including some which can cause disease.

Biodiversity

Refers to the variability of all living organisms in the world or in a particular habitat.

Botany

The scientific study of plants.

Brachiopods

Brachiopods are marine animals that have two unequal shells (valves) that hinge at the rear.

C

Cambrian explosion

Occurred about 542 million years ago and refers to the rapid diversification of organisms at this time.

Contemporaneous

Existing at or occurring in the same period of time.

D

Diversification

Origination of several different species from a single ancestral species.

E

Ecology

The study of the interactions between living organisms and their physical environment.

Ecosystem

A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.

End Devonian mass extinction event

Occurred about 373 million years ago (mya). Also sometimes referred to as the 'late Devonian' extinction event.

End of the Cretaceous 65 mya mass extinction event

Also known as 'Cretaceous-Tertiary' or 'Cretaceous-Paleogene' extinction event.

End of the Ordovician mass extinction event

Occurred about 443 mya. Also known as the 'Ordovician-Silurian' mass extinction. First of the big-five mass extinction events.

End of the Permian mass extinction event

Occurred about 252 mya. Largest extinction event - also known as the 'great dying' almost destroyed all life on earth.

End of the Triassic mass extinction event

Occurred about 208 mya. Also known as 'Triassic-Jurassic' mass extinction.

Eukaryote

Any organism whose cells contain a nucleus and other organelles enclosed within membranes. Eukaryotes include all living organisms with the exception of the eubacteria and archaea.

Extinction event

A broad and rapid decrease in the biodiversity on Earth.

Extinction

The dying out of species without any descendants.

F

Fossil record

The remains of organisms from earlier geological time periods.

H

Homeotic genes

Genes which regulate the development of anatomical structures in various organisms such as insects, mammals, and plants.

L

Locality

Refers to a site containing fossils.

O

Ocean acidification

The ongoing decrease in the pH of the Earth's oceans, caused by the uptake of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere.

Ornithology

The branch of zoology that studies birds.

P

Palaeomagnetism

The study of past variations in the Earth's magnetic field as inferred from geology.

Palaeontologist

A person who studies fossils of the remains of pre-historic life.

Palaeontology

The study of prehistoric fossil remains.

Paleoecology

Uses data from fossils and the depositional environment to reconstruct the ecosystems of past.

Phyla

Plural of phylum, which is a taxonomic rank below kingdom and above class.

R

Radiation or adaptive radiation

The proliferation of species over a relatively short period of geological time.

Radiometric dating

A technique for determining the age of rocks from the decay of their radioactive elements.

Z

Zoology

The study of animals



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