

# Fossils give evidence of a previous world that was very different from the one we live in today.

For many scientists, these fossils seem to prove evolution, but there is evidence that these relics of antiquity may instead point to a worldwide flood.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that in them is.” Exodus 20:11

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:3

## Become a Part of the Discussion

Southern Adventist University fully supports the belief in a literal six-day creation. Recognizing that there are still unanswered questions relating to the creationist worldview, professors and students are involved in research to address these topics.

Southern provides the following resources to enable church and community members to become more educated about issues related to creation.

### Origins Exhibit

The hallways of Hickman Science Center, the home to Southern Adventist University's Biology Department, are being transformed into origins exhibits. Visitors of all ages and scientific levels are able to enjoy the detailed wall art depicting the complexity of God's creation, considerations of the geological column, and thoughts about an Intelligent Designer.

### E. O. Grundset Lecture Series

These natural history and research lectures, open to the public, are held each semester with guest speakers presenting on various scientific topics.

### Origins Weekend

Southern's Biology Department hosts invited speakers to present on origins-related topics on campus each spring.

### Faith and Science Website

Southern is host to a faith and science website, which showcases an interdisciplinary approach to origins: [www.southern.edu/faithandscience](http://www.southern.edu/faithandscience).

Located in Collegedale, Tennessee, Southern Adventist University provides a welcoming learning environment. To learn more about Southern or any of the above resources, call 1.800.SOUTHERN or visit [www.southern.edu](http://www.southern.edu).



## Fossils in the Earth: Do They Prove Evolution or Point to a Flood?

# Fossils in the Earth: Do They Prove Evolution or Point to a Flood?

## Where are fossils found in the earth?

While supervising the digging of the Somerset Canal in southwestern England, William Smith (1769-1839) observed that the same kinds of fossils always occurred in the same layers of rocks. Geologists subsequently confirmed this pattern in different parts of the world. These layers are represented in a chart called the “geologic column.” Real-life representations of the geologic column may be seen in canyons, on the sides of mountains, and in areas where excavation has been done.



The standard geologic column is divided into three major divisions: Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic. Paleozoic means “old animal life,” Mesozoic means “middle animal life,” and Cenozoic means “late animal life.”

Layers of sedimentary rock and fossils that were deposited first are found below the layers that were deposited later. That’s why the bottom layers of fossils and rocks were called Paleozoic. The geologic column only shows the order of fossil burial—not how much time elapsed between the burial of fossils in different layers of sediment.

The idea of time periods and eras (based on the type of fossils found in each part of the geologic column) transformed the geologic column into a geologic time scale. The Paleozoic Era is called the “age of fishes,” the Mesozoic Era is called the “age of reptiles,” and the Cenozoic Era is called the “age of mammals.”

Scientists have tried to figure out the actual age of the fossils by using radiometric dating, a technique that is based on measurable rates of radioactive decay. Because it is difficult to obtain radiometric dates from fossils or from the sedimentary rocks that surround them, the radiometric dates usually come from the volcanic or igneous rocks found with the fossils, not from the fossils themselves.

## How has the geologic column been interpreted?

An analysis of the patterns of fossil deposition reveals that different layers show different communities of fossil organisms rather than the gradual transformation of one kind of organism into another. The bottom of the Paleozoic layer contains communities of marine animals, beginning with tiny shelled animals and trilobites and transitioning to communities of fish farther up. Proceeding up through the Paleozoic, we find communities of amphibians

and reptiles, followed by Mesozoic communities of the first fossils of small mammals and the first dinosaurs. Higher in the Mesozoic, we find communities of many different dinosaurs and the first birds. The first flowering plant fossils then appear, and the dinosaurs disappear. In the Cenozoic, we find communities dominated by mammals. Finally, in the uppermost layers, the first human fossils are found.

**The geologic column only shows the order of fossil burial—not how much time elapsed between the burial of fossils in the different layers of sediment.**

Evolutionists interpreted the data as evidence for evolution from simple one-celled organisms up to man over billions of years. Meanwhile, many Christians, including early Adventists, did not believe that there really was order in the fossil record. To them it was just a theory used to support the beliefs of evolutionists.

This viewpoint was strongly promoted by George McCready Price (1870-1963), an early Adventist creationist who wrote extensively on flood geology. Harold W. Clark (1891-1986), an Adventist biology professor who had studied under Price, initially adopted these ideas. But

in 1938, he visited the oil fields of Oklahoma and Texas and learned of the remarkable sequence of microscopic fossils documented by oil company geologists. These sequences were consistently found in the cores from thousands of oil wells that had been drilled. Clark became convinced that the order in the fossil record was real. He subsequently proposed the theory of ecological zonation to explain the data from the perspective of Noah’s flood. Today, this hypothesis is often called the “principle of biome succession.”

## How does biome succession explain the layers we see?

A biome (once referred to as a “life zone”) is a group of plant and animal communities that live in specific environmental conditions. These conditions, such as temperature and humidity, are determined by altitude, latitude, climate, and local geography. Consequently, differing types of plants and animals are found in flatlands as compared with mountains. Some biomes are found on land, while others are found in oceans or in freshwater. Terrestrial biomes include grasslands, mountain forests,

deserts, or arctic tundra. Marine biomes include coral reefs and kelp forests. Each of these biomes are inhabited by different communities of plants and animals.

In a mountainous area, different biomes are found at different altitudes and can be correlated from one series of mountain ranges to another. In the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, six biomes have been identified. These range from the Lower Sonoran, which is found at the lowest altitude, to the Arctic Alpine, which occurs at the highest altitude. The Lower Sonoran communities of plants and animals are completely different from those of the Arctic Alpine biome. Different kinds of grasses, shrubs, and trees grow at different altitudes due to the differences in temperature and rainfall. So if you were to travel from the ocean up to the top of one of the mountains, you would pass through a succession of different biomes. When fossil ranges are diagramed on a chart showing the layers where they are found, it actually looks quite similar to the chart of modern mammal distributions in different biomes. So we find that the pattern of modern mammal distribution is comparable to that which is seen in the fossil record.

If the flood were to happen today, there would be a succession of biomes encountered and buried in a predictable order as the floodwaters rose. The first biomes to be buried would be marine biomes. This correlates with the marine fossil communities found at the bottom of the geologic column. If reptiles, dinosaurs, and small mammals lived in a warmer biome at lower altitude, one would expect to find their fossil community above the marine fossil communities. Again, this correlates with what is found in the geologic column. As the floodwaters continued to rise, the biomes from higher, cooler altitudes would then be buried, which would likely be mammal communities. This also corresponds with the order found in the geologic column.

**If the flood were to happen today, there would be a succession of biomes encountered and buried in a predictable order as the floodwaters rose.**

Based on this hypothesis, the layers of fossils found in the earth could certainly be explained by a worldwide flood—such as that described in Genesis.

## The Geologic Column\*



\* Image of geologic layers is for illustrative purposes only