

PREHISTORIC EVOLUTION TIMELINE

A Chronological Record of Life on Earth

4.6 BYA -

541 MYA

Precambrian Supereon

Hadean / Archean / Proterozoic

Formation of Earth, origin of life (cyanobacteria), and the rise of multi-cellular organisms and atmospheric oxygen.

541 -

252 MYA

Paleozoic Era

Cambrian & Ordovician

The "Cambrian Explosion" of marine invertebrate life. Appearance of first vertebrates (jawless fish).

Silurian & Devonian

The "Age of Fish." Plants and insects begin colonizing land. First amphibians evolve.

Carboniferous & Permian

Extensive coal forests and giant insects. Evolution of reptiles. Ends with the "Great Dying" mass extinction.

252 -

66 MYA

Mesozoic Era

Triassic

The rise of the first dinosaurs and primitive mammals. Pangea begins to break apart.

Jurassic

Dinosaurs dominate the land. First birds appear. Dominance of gymnosperm plants.

Cretaceous

Flowering plants (angiosperms) evolve. Ends with the K-Pg extinction event (asteroid impact).

66 MYA -

Present

Cenozoic Era

Paleogene & Neogene

The "Age of Mammals." Rapid diversification of mammals and birds. Cooling climate and rise of grasslands.

Quaternary

Cycles of ice ages. Evolution of the genus *Homo* and the rise of modern human civilization.