

## WEEK 2 THE EFFECTS OF EXTINCTIONS

This week, we explore the first and second mass extinction events that occurred. The first one, at the end of the Ordovician and the second, the end of the Devonian. We heard from Tetsuto Miyashita about vertebrate evolution and how and when fish with jaws first evolved. We also had the wonderful opportunity to talk to Rob Gess about a locality that gives us a window into what a 360 million year old lagoon looked like. Lastly, we look at how fish fins became limbs and we spoke about the radiation of the tetrapods. The effects of both these extinction events were mainly felt in the aquatic realms since, at that this time, life was predominantly restricted to aquatic environments, although plants and arthropods had just begun to make this transition onto land. These extinction events is in stark contrast to the subsequent extinction events which affected both land and aquatic ecosystems. One of the interesting aspects of the end Devonian extinction event is that, although it may have been caused by multiple events, one of the main culprits is thought to have been the widespread development of Archaeopteris forest that may have led to global cooling. So here we have the success of one species that led to the extinction events that led to multiple species going extinct. If this is true, then it could be likened to the dominance of humans today who are wreaking havoc on both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems around the world. Next week we will talk about the end-Permian extinction event and we will chat to three paleontologists about their wonderful research into the events that lead up to the end of the Permian extinction event, as well as the recovery thereafter.



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