

WEEK 1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome to Extinctions: Past and Present. I am Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan. I'm a paleontologist based in the biological sciences department at the University of Cape Town.

As a biologist and paleontologist I am fascinated by the biodiversity around us. I'm really intrigued by how this biodiversity came about.

The fossil record tells us that life extends about 3.8 billion years ago. Through this immense period of time we see that there've been many radiations and many extinctions but what stands out is that there were five big mass extinction events that affected biodiversity on our planet, and we know today that these extinction events shaped the biodiversity that we see today.

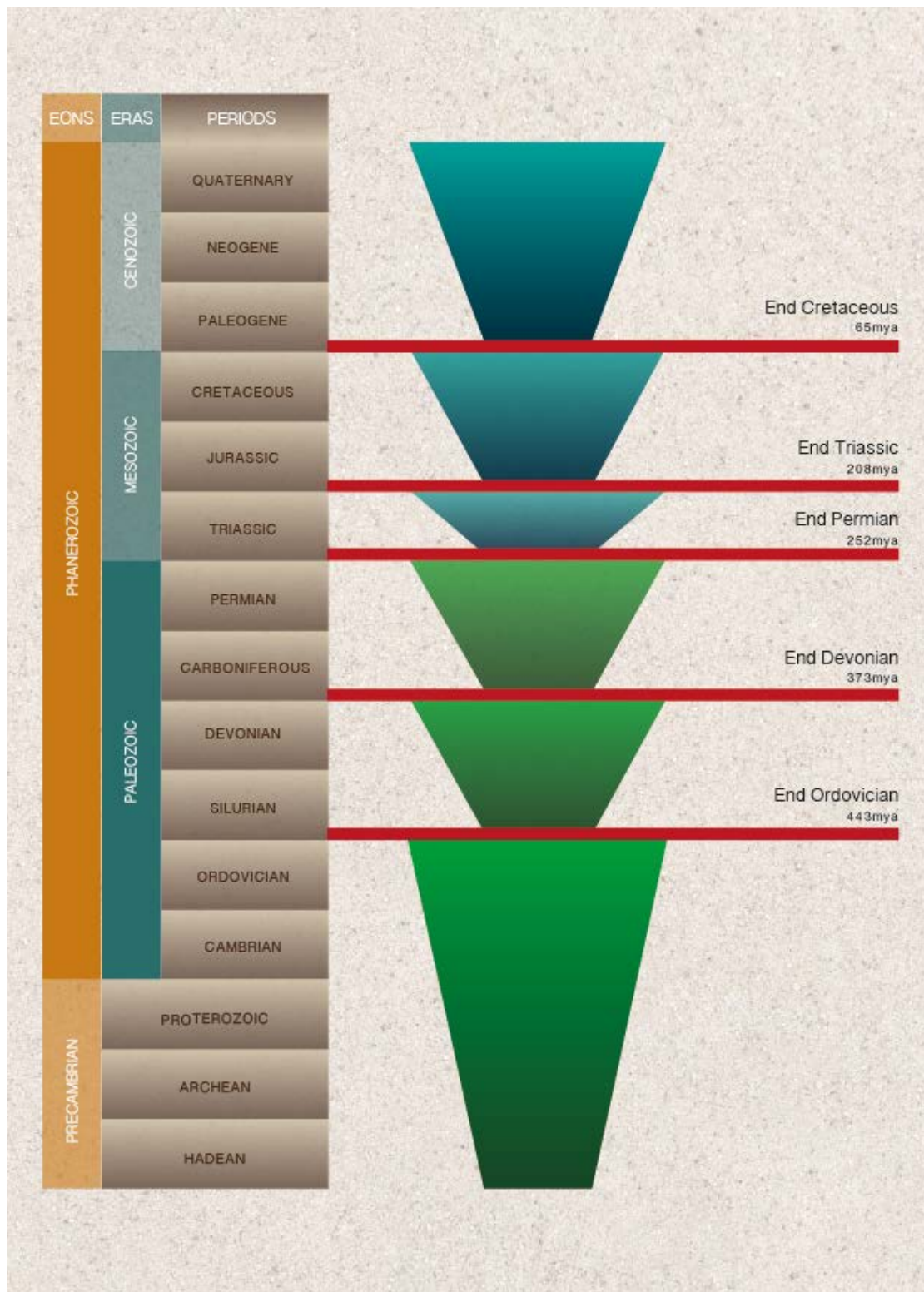
In the next five weeks on our course Extinctions: Past and Present we will talk first about the emergence of life and we'll see what the fossil record tells us about the origin of life and how life diversified.

In the second week we'll begin to talk about the big five extinction events that have occurred. We've talked about how each of these extinction events affected life at the time and we'll talk about post extinction events that led to other diversifications.

In the last week of the course we'll talk about the current extinction event that is facing biodiversity today. In this course we will have the opportunity to talk to many different scientists. We will talk to paleontologists, we'll talk to ecologists, botanists, biologists, ornithologists, and each of them will share with us their research expertise and talk to us about the threats that biodiversity is facing today.

In the end I hope you will be able to appreciate how these current extinction events are being driven by humankind and we will all be better informed about how we can

curb the onslaught of extinction of modern organisms and in the end, hopefully, we'll be better stewards of our planet's biodiversity.



Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan 2017

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