



PROTISTS

Foraminifera

545 MYA – PRESENT

Foraminifera, also known as forams, are a large group of single-celled mostly marine amoeboid protists. Forams are usually less than one millimetre in diameter, but some are much larger, even several centimetres across. They typically produce a shell,

or test, which can comprise of one or many chambers. This test is usually made of calcium carbonate or particles of sediment that have been cemented together.

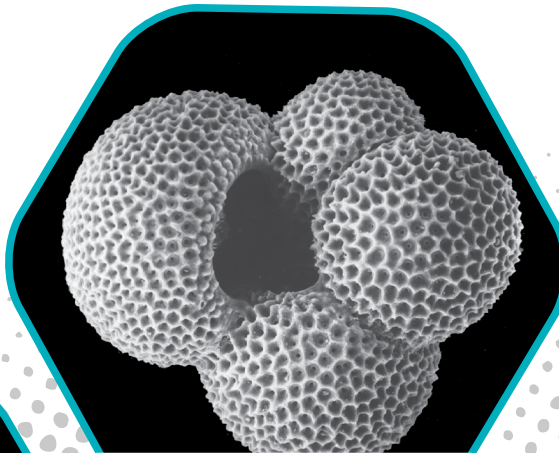
Domain	Eukaryota
Kingdom	Animalia
Phylum	Retaria
Subphylum	Foraminifera
Unranked	Protists

Fossil Record

The oldest fossil foraminifera are found in the Cambrian as tubes of cemented sediment particles, or with thin organic walls. It was not until the Carboniferous that forams evolved calcium carbonate tests. Calcium carbonate tests have become very abundant and include a huge variety of forms.

Habitat and Lifestyle

Foraminifera are found throughout the Earth's oceans from the shoreline to the deep ocean trenches and from the tropics to the poles. They can be planktonic (float in the water), benthic (live on the sea floor) or even attached to algae or other organisms.



A test of the foraminiferan, *Globigerina woodi*, Miocene (about 20 million years old), Victoria. Image from George Chaproniere.



A test of the foraminiferan, *Globigerinella digitata*, modern, western Pacific. Image from George Chaproniere.

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DID YOU KNOW

Foraminifera from the deepest part of the ocean, the Mariana Trench off the Philippines, all have tests made from organic material. The extreme pressures experienced at great depths can inhibit the production and growth of calcium carbonate which their shallow depth cousins produce.

