



Domain Eukaryota  
Kingdom Animalia

# Ediacaran biota

635–538.8 MYA – EXTINCT

Nobody is certain what the strange organisms of the Ediacaran really were. They are commonly grouped together as ‘Ediacaran biota’.

Some looked like fronds, some like jellyfish, some like worms, others looked like small sponges, slugs, shields, or bags. While some of these organisms may be related to modern animals, others are not.

## Fossil Record

This group of strange organisms first appeared in the middle Ediacaran about 580 million years ago, but most had disappeared by the beginning of the Cambrian, 539 million years ago.

## Fossilisation

Ediacaran biota had no skeletons that can easily fossilise, so it is surprising that there is any record of them left. It is thought that they were preserved by being quickly buried in ash or sand, trapping them in their natural environment.

## Habitat and Lifestyle

Ediacaran biota seemed to have lived in shallow marine environments.

### More on Ediacaran biota



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Nilpena Ediacara  
National Park



Ediacaran, *Dickinsonia costata*,  
Ediacaran (about 580 million years old),  
South Australia. Image from Jim Gehling,  
South Australian Museum.



Ediacaran, *Parvancorina minchami*,  
Ediacaran (about 580 million years old)  
South Australia. Image from Jim Gehling,  
South Australian Museum.

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## DID YOU KNOW

Although Ediacaran biota had been found in other continents in the 1800s, it was not until the late 1940s that they were found in large numbers in the Ediacara Hills in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia. That is where the name for the Ediacaran Period comes from. Others have been found near the White Sea in north western Russia.

