



## Fossil Findings

### What have the scientists discovered?

- A group of fossils could hold the clue to why dinosaurs died, a team of scientists says.
- 66 million years ago, a meteor crashed into modern-day Mexico, causing many species to die.

Illustration: Fossilised fish from the Cretaceous era.

## Fossils Show How Dinosaurs Died

Scientists have found fossils which could explain how the dinosaurs became **extinct**. They were discovered in Tanis, North Dakota, in the north of the USA.

A team of 12 scientists found a group of fossils that date from 66 million years ago. They were remains of fish and trees which scientists believe were killed by a **meteor** collision.

The team noticed that the fossils had been sprayed with rock and glass. This glass had been created by a meteor crashing into Earth.

One fossil showed how a fish had breathed in bits of the meteor. This material was lodged in its gills, which fish use to breathe.

66 million years ago, a meteor crashed into the Yucatan Peninsula, in modern-day Mexico. It had a devastating effect on animal and plant species.

The force from this event created extreme weather around the Earth. When it landed, huge amounts of earth were flung into the air.

This then fell back down in a firestorm of **molten** rock and glass. Scientists believe that the meteor destroyed three-quarters of the world's animal and plant species.

This is when the Cretaceous period ended and the Paleogene period began. The Cretaceous was the last era during which dinosaurs existed. In the Paleogene period, mammals started to **evolve**.

The team believe that this discovery shows "the full nature" of the meteor.

### Glossary

<b>extinct</b>	When a species has no living members.
<b>meteor</b>	A small rock that enters the Earth's atmosphere.
<b>molten</b>	When rocks become liquid due to extreme heat.
<b>evolve</b>	When animals and plants develop over generations.

# Questions

1. Around how many years ago did the dinosaurs become extinct?

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2. What did the meteor collision cause?

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3. Find a phrase the author uses to show that the meteor caused a lot of damage.

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4. Why do you think scientists will never know for certain why the dinosaurs became extinct? Explain your answer.

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5. Do you think some people believe that end of the Cretaceous period was an important moment? Explain your answer.

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6. The team believe that this discovery shows “the full nature” of the meteor. In this sentence, what do you think the phrase ‘full nature’ means? Explain your answer.

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7. Summarise the news story in 15 words or fewer.

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# Answers

1. Around how many years ago did the dinosaurs become extinct?  
**66 million years ago**
2. What did the meteor collision cause?  
**Accept any answer which refers to the story, e.g. It caused a firestorm of molten rock and glass.**
3. Find a phrase the author uses to show that the meteor caused a lot of damage.  
**It had a devastating effect on animal and plant species.**
4. Why do you think scientists will never know for certain why the dinosaurs became extinct? Explain your answer.  
**Accept any answer which refers to the story, e.g. I think they will not know for certain as they rely on evidence in fossils which may not be that clear.**
5. Why do you think some people believe that the end of the Cretaceous period was an important moment? Explain your answer.  
**Accept any answer which refers to the story, e.g. I think some people believe that the end of Cretaceous period was an important moment because it was when the dinosaurs became extinct and mammals started to appear.**
6. The team believe that this discovery shows “the full nature” of the meteor. In this sentence, what do you think the phrase ‘full nature’ means? Explain your answer.  
**Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the story, e.g. I think the phrase ‘full nature’ means they can understand how animals were killed by the meteor.**
7. Summarise the news story in 15 words or fewer.  
**Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the story and is 15 words or fewer, e.g. Scientists have found some fossils in North Dakota and they explain how dinosaurs became extinct.**