



The Cenozoic Era

By

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Cenozoic means new life. The Cenozoic Era began about 65 million years ago. It is the era that is still going on today. It has 2 periods:

- The Tertiary Period
- The Quaternary Period

The Tertiary Period came first and lasted from 65 million years ago until 1.8 million years ago. During this time the earth was warm with lots of rain. Dense forest covered much of the land.

Just before the beginning of the Tertiary Period there was a great extinction. The dinosaurs all died. So did many other plants and animals. This made room for other plants and animals. The ones that survived the extinction were able to adapt to the new conditions. The new life that developed during the Cenozoic Era were the mammals and flowering plants.

There were mammals before this but not very many. They were small mouse-like animals. During the Tertiary Period mammals became very successful. They took the places left by the dinosaurs. Bats, whales, deer, and many other familiar mammals developed at this time.

Towards the end of the Tertiary Period the climate got cooler. The flowering plants could adapt to the cooler conditions. Grasses became plentiful. They supported large grazing animals like horses. There were large predators too, wolves, bears, and big saber-toothed cats.

Antarctica moved over the south pole and large mountains formed in many parts of the world. With the cooler climate snow fell on these areas. Glaciers started to form. So much water was trapped in glaciers that the sea level dropped. A global ice age began!

The ice age marked the beginning of the Quaternary Period about 1.8 million years ago. It was very cold much of the time. Huge glaciers covered a lot of the land. Some animals like mammoths, rhinoceros, bison and reindeer grew thick fur coats to help them survive the cold.

This was the time that humans developed. We have not been here very long.