



The
Geological
Society

-serving science & profession

Western Regional Group

Shifting Sands: The Fossil Record of Early Animal Evolution from Southern Namibia

Dr Alex Liu, University of Cambridge

Tuesday 23rd July 2024

Hybrid Talk: 6:30pm Start (see below for details)

Recent studies suggest that fossils of the Ediacaran biota, which include the oldest recognisable animals, experience a major decline in species diversity around 550 million years ago. This has been interpreted by some as Earth's first "mass extinction", a conclusion that would have substantial implications for our understanding of early animal evolution.

Work by my team in Cambridge on the Nama Group of southern Namibia is challenging this extinction narrative. Via comparison with field data collected in Australia, Canada and China, I will show how Namibian sedimentological data demonstrate that there are strong ecological, sedimentological and environmental explanations for differences in the fossil assemblages we see before and after the proposed 'extinction'. Furthermore, when we apply sedimentological knowledge to predict areas where we might look to find diverse Ediacaran fossil assemblages, we find spectacular new fossil sites that promise to fill major gaps in the early evolution and radiation of several animal phyla.

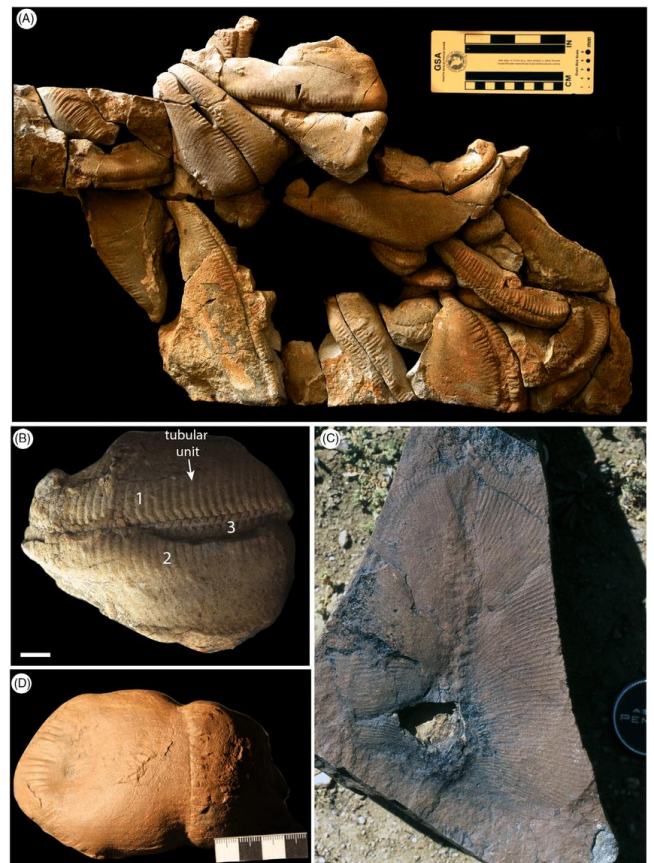
Join us on 23rd July as Alex provides a fascinating insights gained from the Ediacaran fossils and how his work is challenging the extinction narrative.

Alex is an Associate Professor in palaeobiology at the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Cambridge. He has been there since 2016, following undergraduate and PhD degrees in Oxford, and postdoctoral positions in Cambridge and Bristol. His research investigates the fossil record of early animal evolution, and incorporates petrological, sedimentological and palaeontological approaches.

Hybrid Event! When: 23rd July 2024, 6:30 PM. *Entry is free, non-members welcome.*

In-person: The Hub, 500 Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol, BS32 4RZ. Room opens from 6pm

Zoom Details:



e-mail

Get in touch

westernregionalgroup@gmail.com

www

Find us on the web

www.geolsoc.org.uk/wrg



Connect on LinkedIn

[WRG ID: 2670120](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wrg)



Follow us on Twitter

[@WRG_GeolSoc](https://twitter.com/WRG_GeolSoc)

Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BG
Email: enquiries@geolsoc.org.uk Web: www.geolsoc.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 210161