

It once rained for two million years, say scientists

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Harder



Farmers pray for rain in times of drought. Most of us have experience of wanting the heavens to open for our garden to be watered during an excessively dry spell. However, none of us can imagine a prolonged period of rain lasting two million years. U.K. geologist and forensic scientist Alastair Ruffell has discovered that 200-300 million years ago, before the single landmass of Pangea separated into continents, Earth did see an era during which it rained non-stop for up to two million years. Dr Ruffell said this helped forge the development of flora and fauna all over the globe. He believes the precipitation may have been sparked by a huge rise in humidity following a series of massive volcanic eruptions.

Dr Ruffell and his team based their findings on research conducted on strata of rock in the Eastern Alps in Europe in the 1970s and 80s. The data showed unusual layers deposited in ancient rock that dated back over 200 million years. Ruffell said this led to growing evidence that the wet period may have been, "the trigger that enabled dinosaurs, and possibly the other members of our modern land-based fauna, to diversify and dominate the land". He added: "It may have been one of the most important events in the history of life, in terms of its role in allowing not only the age of dinosaurs, but also the origins of most key classes that form the modern fauna of...turtles, crocodiles, lizards and mammals."

Sources: unilad.com / earth.com / ifisience.com / breakingnewsenglish.com

DO YOU AGREE?

"The most important events in history happened millions of years ago".

TRUE? FALSE?

According to the article, identify whether the statements are true or false.

- 1) Farmers pray for drought in times of heavy rain. T / F
- 2) The article says rain turns our gardens into heaven. T / F
- 3) There was a single landmass on Earth 300 million years ago. T / F
- 4) The rain may have been caused by volcanic eruptions. T / F
- 5) The geologists studied research data from the 1990s. T / F
- 6) The research data showed unusual rock from the early 10th century. T / F
- 7) Geologists say the rain may have facilitated the emergence of dinosaurs. T / F
- 8) Geologists say the rain may have facilitated the death of ancient lizards. T/F

SYNONYM MATCH

(The words in bold are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. drought | a. left behind |
| 2. spell | b. set up |
| 3. prolonged | c. set off |
| 4. forge | d. part |
| 5. sparked | e. period |
| 6. conducted | f. branch out |
| 7. deposited | g. carried out |
| 8. diversify | h. lack of rain |
| 9. role | i. basic |
| 10. key | j. elongated |

DISCUSS MORE

- 1) Have you ever prayed for rain?
- 2) What do you think of rain?
- 3) How important is rain?
- 4) How do you feel when it rains all day long?
- 5) How would you feel if it rained every day for a year?
- 6) Would you like to go back to the time of the dinosaurs?
- 7) What are the most important events in the history of your life?
- 8) Would you like to live somewhere where it never rains?
- 9) What do you think Earth will be like in 200 million years from now?
- 10) What questions would you like to ask the geologists?

RAINY DAYS

Which of these is the best thing to do on a rainy day? Rank the items from 1 (top) to 8 (bottom).

- _ Go for a walk
- _ Splash in puddles
- _ Do the gardening
- _ Visit a museum
- _ Study English
- _ Sleep
- _ Housework
- _ Watch a movie