



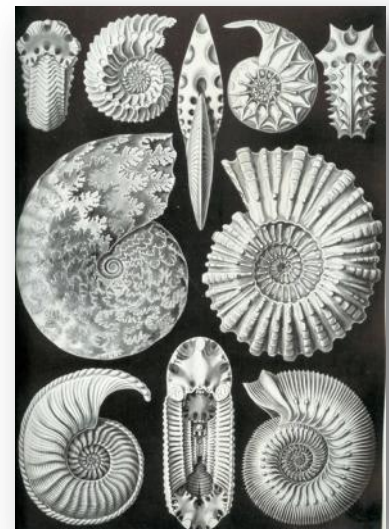
Ammonite Fossils

These sea creatures first appeared 415 million years ago in the form of a small, straight shelled creature, known as Bacrites. They quickly evolved into a variety of shapes and sizes including some shaped like hairpins. During their evolution the ammonites faced no less than three catastrophic events that would eventually lead to their extinction. The first event occurred during the Permian (250 million years ago), where only 10% survived. These surviving species went on to flourish throughout the Triassic, however at the end of this period (206 million years ago) they faced near extinction, when all but one species survived. This event marked the end of the Triassic and the beginning of the Jurassic, during which time the number of ammonite species grew once more. The final catastrophe occurred at the end of the Cretaceous period when all species were annihilated and the ammonites became extinct. This event apparently coincided with the death of the dinosaurs.



Jurassic and cretaceous Ammonites.

Some Ammonites have intricate patterns on their shells called sutures. The different suture patterns tell us what time period the Ammonite is from. Geometric = numerous undivided lobes and saddles; eight lobes around the conch is characteristic of the Paleozoic Ammonites. Ceratitic = lobes have subdivided tips; giving them a saw-toothed appearance and rounded undivided saddles; Characteristic of the Triassic Ammonites. Ammonitic lobes and saddles are fluted; subdivisions are usually rounded instead of saw-toothed. This pattern is characteristic of the



During medieval times ammonites were believed to be petrified snakes. They were fitted with carved heads and sold to pilgrims. The original discus used by the ancient Greeks in their Olympics was a fossilized ammonite! In India ammonite fossils are identified with the god Vishnu and are used in various ceremonies. The Navajo and Indians of the North American Plains carried ammonites in their medicine bags for health and good hunting. They called the ammonites buffalo stones because of their resemblance to the North American bison.