

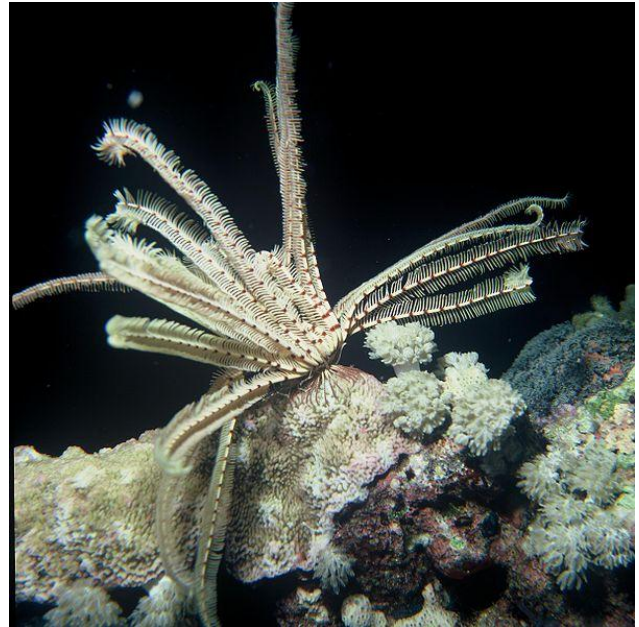


# Crinoid Fossil

## Ancient creatures from the deep.

Crinoids, also known as sea lilies or feather-stars, are marine animals that make up the class Crinoidea of the echinoderms (phylum Echinodermata). They live both in shallow water and in depths as much as several thousand metres. Crinoids have graced the oceans for more than 500 million years. Among the most attractive fossils found today, Crinoids had a key role in the ecology of marine communities through much of the fossil record, and their remains are prominent rock forming constituents of many limestones.

Some of the best quality Crinoid fossils are found in Crawfordsville Indiana which is world renowned for its Crinoid fossils. A most appealing characteristic of this fauna is the amazing diversity of well-preserved



specimens found in exquisite 3-D relief. While the sheer diversity alone is astonishing, the fact that many complete crowns with attached stems are found is a further attraction.

Crinoids reached their highest generic richness and overall abundance during the Mississippian period, which thus has been dubbed the Age of Crinoids. This was the earliest/lowermost of two divisions of the Carboniferous period lasting from roughly 359 to 318 Ma (million years ago). As with most other

geochronologic units, the rock beds that define the Mississippian are well identified, but the exact start and end dates are uncertain by a few million years. The Mississippian period is so named because rocks from this age are exposed in the Mississippi River valley.

The Age of Crinoids ended with a major drop in sea level at the end of the Mississippian as massive glaciers formed on Gondwana and epicontinental seas were drained.

