

THE FUTURE IS WILD

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5 MILLION YEARS IN THE FUTURE



The Earth is in the last throes of the current ice age. Humans are extinct and much of the world's fresh water is locked up in the huge ice caps that reach as far south as Paris and north to Buenos Aires. On the edges of the ice, animals have adapted to the bitter cold and vicious winters; in the tropics, the rainforest has all but disappeared, replaced by dry savanna. Yet change is in the air - a sudden increase in volcanic eruptions pours greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the planet begins to warm up, and the melting ice creates massive, devastating floods.

Average global temperatures are 5 - 6 degrees below present. Fresh water locked in the ice caps has resulted in sea levels dropping, approximately 100 - 150 m below current values with ice caps stretching as far south as Paris and as far north as southern Chile and Argentina. The temperature changes in the tropics will be only 1 or 2 degrees but high latitudes, particularly Northern Europe, could be 30 degrees colder.

North American Desert

The drier climate has had dramatic effects on the interior of the North American continent, turning it into a vast, cool desert frequently battered by fierce sandstorms.

Spink

Spinks are colonial birds that spend virtually all their lives underground in burrows, a much more pleasant place to be than the unforgiving surface. They feed on roots and sugar-rich sap of the desert turnip; it takes a lot of spinks to maintain a tunnel system large enough to reach sufficient desert turnips.



Rattleback

This is a sub-species of the South American rattleback. In this harsh desert the insulation properties of the scales and the behavior of clamping down to the ground have helped it thrive in this hostile desert. Bristles around face keep sand out of the face.



Deathgleaner

Deathgleaners are huge bats, with a 1.3m wingspan that enables them to soar effortlessly over the desert for hours, searching the desert for carcasses. They can also tackle weak rattleback youngsters.



Mediterranean

Movement of the African and European plates has left the Mediterranean land locked. Combined with the drier atmosphere, this has resulted in the Mediterranean Sea largely drying out.

Gryken

A descendent of the pine marten, this is a fast, fierce and above all, stealthy predator. It uses the natural cover of the fissures in the limestone pavements (the grykes) as cover to stalk unwary prey, such as the scrofa.



Cryptile

Cryptiles are about 18 inches long and pale pink, covered with crusty salt crystals that act as perfect camouflage against the lagoon shore. Glands in the skin secrete a sticky substance onto the frill. When the lizards sprint through a cloud of brine flies the frill acts like fly paper, allowing the cryptile to lick the flies off it's frill at it's leisure.



Scrofa

The scrofa is descended from old world pigs, but is very small by pig standards, at approx. 8-12 inches high at the shoulder. They are also thinner than most current day pigs, and their legs are longer, making them extremely well equipped to negotiate the rocky regions on the borders of the basin.



Amazon Grasslands

In the Amazon basin, the extensive rainforests are now reduced to a few tiny pockets, surrounded by extensive areas of tall grass savanna with scattered trees.

Carakiller

In the absence of established ground predators this descendent of a caracara has evolved into a large velociraptor-like bird. About eight feet tall, with a large, hooked beak and razor-sharp claws they are fearsome predators. They have long legs and are well adapted to short bursts of speed.



Babookari

Of the huge diversity of monkeys that used to live in the trees, only some of those have adapted to life on the grassland. Babookaris live in extended family groups and patrol large territories in search of food. They weave baskets that they leave in streams to trap fish.



Rattleback

These tough characters are descended from a large south American rodent, something like the alpaca. They have big muscular forelimbs with strong shovel like claws for digging. Facial muscles can pull specially shaped scales over their eyes.



North European Ice

Northwest Europe will still be battered by westerlies carrying a lot of water so there will be severe blizzards in the bitterly cold winter.

Shagrat

Herds of shagrats come to the tundra during the spring. They are rodents, roughly the size of sheep, and are descended from European marmots. They have thick, shaggy coats and powerful claws to dig up hidden roots and stems buried in the hard earth.



Snowstalker

Herds of shagrats come to the tundra during the spring. They are rodents, roughly the size of sheep, and are descended from European marmots. They have thick, shaggy coats and powerful claws to dig up hidden roots and stems buried in the hard earth.



Gannetwhale

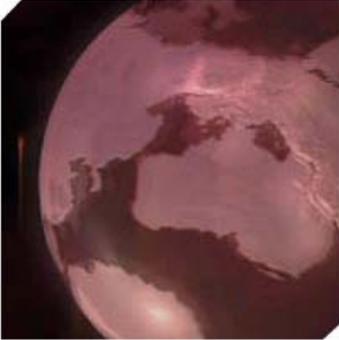
With whales extinct and seals decimated other animals have started to occupy the newly available niches. One new species that has done this is the gannetwhale. From a distance they resemble a large seal, about 14 feet long, bulky but surprisingly fast and agile swimmers.



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100 MILLION YEARS IN THE FUTURE



Volcanoes belching out greenhouse gases eventually turned the Earth into a hothouse - sweltering, steamy, wet. Rainforests coat the land and the atmosphere is rich in carbon dioxide and oxygen. Animals adapt to the damp warmth; insects grow huge, flying insects have meter wingspans, and the world's biggest creatures walk the Earth. But the Earth itself is restless. Although volcanoes have been active throughout, now, huge eruptions bring the planet to the brink of its worst disaster ever. Most of life is annihilated, leaving the world barren and empty. Or is it?

The sun's luminosity has increased by about 0.7%. The mean global temperatures are 6 degrees higher than present and there is little permanent ice. Sea levels have risen, creating extensive shallow seas. High evaporation and precipitation leads to a hot, wet climate with prolific vegetation. It is possible that there will be an increase in O₂ and higher atmospheric pressure.

Great Plateau

Australia has traveled so far north - into the northern hemisphere - that it has collided with Asia and North America. This has resulted in a massive mountain range bigger than the Himalayas of today.

Great Blue Windrunner

A successful new group of birds have evolved in this era, in which the legs are adapted as flying surfaces, so making four wings. The most spectacular example is the great blue windrunner, a striking site with its iridescent blue plumage and a 2.5m wingspan.



Silver Spider

Big colonial spiders that build vast nest like webs, draped over the plateau rock face. These webs collect seeds blown in from the foot of the plateau. The younger spiders gather the seeds and take them to seed piles, stacked safely underground.



Poggie

One of the last surviving mammals, this small, runt-like rodent is relatively immobile and depends on the seeds stockpiled by the silver spiders. The poggie community thrives in the sheltered environment, which is just as well since the silver spiders are actually farming them for meat.



Bengal Swamp

The Bay of Bengal is now enclosed, cut off from the open sea by the arrival of Mozambique and Madagascar moving east. What were the Himalayas are eroded to low hills.

Swampus

The first octopus to venture onto land and become adapted to live both in the water and on the shore. It is a formidable predator measuring up to 3m in length, using its arms to grab passing prey and a highly poisonous bite to quickly subdue its catch.



Toraton

Reptiles are doing well due to the warm conditions, and this tortoise descendent is the largest animal to have ever walked on earth. They are 7m tall and weigh up to 120 tons. Equally at home on dry land or wading through the swamp, they spend the day browsing for food, as they have to consume huge amounts of vegetation.



Lurkfish

These murky waters provide a home to a host of dangerous creatures. Possibly the most dangerous is the lurkfish. This 4m long sophisticated ambush hunter is capable of generating an electrical charge of over 1000 volts that stuns even the largest prey.



Antarctic Forest

Antarctica has been pulled north by a subduction zone at the bottom of the Indian ocean and now lies partially in the tropics. Instead of snow, ice and penguins, there is now dense tropical rainforest. This rainforest has evolved from whatever plant species made it to the isolated continent first. Similarly, the animals there have radiated to fill all the available niches have evolved from relatively few ancestors, as reaching this virgin continent was so difficult.

Roachcutter

A group of birds descended from sea birds that were first to colonize Antarctica. They have radiated to become the dominant form of birds in the continents rainforest. One such species is the roachcutter - it hunts big insect prey and kills them with a swift bite of its sharp bill.



Spitfire Bird

Spitfire Bird - Collects chemicals from Beech Burners, which when mixed are highly corrosive. When threatened they spit the chemicals at the assailant through their nostrils, which proves a powerful deterrent. They use orange patches under their wings to flash a warning at potential predators.



Falconfly

A vicious predator descended from wasps. They can grow up to 15cm in total length and can grab a spitfire bird out of the air during flight. Their first pair of legs is a grasping pair, second modified to form a spear that it thrusts into it's prey.



Spitfire Beetle

Colorful red and white beetles that group together mimic the flowers of the beech burner to attract the spitfire bird. It takes four spitfire beetles with their wings spread to create the illusion of a flower. When the bird comes close enough, the beetles explode outwards, using their powerful back legs.



Shallow Seas

A rise in sea level has resulted in areas of shallow, warm sea. Coral reefs became extinct during the ice age as sea levels dropped, but some algae have evolved to form new types of reef

Ocean Phantom

This is a huge sea creature that visits the algal reef, approximately 10m long and 4m wide. Each phantom is actually a colony of thousands of individual creatures combined into one giant organism.



Reef Glider

Descended from sea slugs, these are 4m long and shaped like a giant teardrop. Swimming using a series of wings along their flanks, they patrol the shallow seas hunting for ocean phantoms. They have keen eyesight and can also sense chemical changes in the water.



Spindletrooper

Spider-like creatures stretching 1m across that live in special bell-like chambers in the ocean phantom. In exchange for being fed by the ocean phantom they defend the phantom from attack from the reef glider. They slash at the attackers with their large poisoned jaws, inflicting gaping wounds.



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200 MILLION YEARS IN THE FUTURE



After the last great mass extinction, just a few life forms had survived, and free from old pressures and competition, they have evolved into strange and bizarre creatures - beyond imagination. The slow drift of the continents over the globe has finally brought the landmasses together into one super-continent, and most of the world is covered in a huge ocean. What new life has evolved in this ocean? What has the process of evolution done to life on the supercontinent? And what will happen next?

There is now one large supercontinent, "Pangea II", the bulk of which is north of the equator. The center of this continent is a huge extreme desert, with no rainfall to speak of. A single world ocean has a major effect on weather patterns. Water travels westward around the equator, being warmed by the sun as it does. In today's world there are continents in the way of this equatorial current, that deflect it to the north or south before it has chance to get too warm.

Central Desert

In the center of the huge continent is a vast, severe desert that makes today's Death Valley look like a tropical paradise. This place is so far from the moist air from over the oceans, that there are no clouds - and no rain. In summer the temperatures can soar to over 50 degrees centigrade, and winter can see lows of 30 degrees below. The only water comes from access to the subterranean world below, via boreholes or occasional oasis.

Terabyte

These are descendents of termites that now build huge bizarre cities, over hundreds of years. The structures above ground are air-conditioned greenhouses, where the terabytes cultivate algae to feed on. Without the terabytes care the algae could not survive the deserts extreme conditions.



Gloomworm

These are very simple worms that swim around in dark caves. They live on bacteria and get eaten by just about anything else in the cave. All the species of worm here are descended from a common ancestor, a bristleworm that survived the mass extinction by living in caves.



Slickribben

This transparent creature can grow up to 1m in length. It has powerful pincer jaws and a nasty sting, and is equipped with numerous bristles on its side to help with swimming and sensing water pressure changes.



Garden Worm

These worms emerge from the fissures in the ground onto the desert surface so they can photosynthesize. They have fleshy lobes containing millions of tiny algae. These lobes resemble leaves. The 'leaves' then fan out to maximize the surface area exposed to the sun.



Rainshadow Desert

Powerful hurricanes, batter the east coast of the supercontinent all year round. But the immense southeast mountain range stops most of this moisture reaching inland, creating a parched desert. These 'hypercanes' supply vital sources of nourishment. They whisk marine animals such as fish, up into the atmosphere, carrying them over the mountains and dumping them in the Rainshadow Desert.

Bumblebee

Bumble beetles are insects pushed to the edge of specialization by the nature of this desert. They spend their lives in search of "fish wrecks", which are a very rich food source. But it is impossible to predict when and where they will occur.



Grimworm

These worms are found at the site of a "fish wreck", and are highly adapted for rapid growth inside the fish carcasses. They have three pairs of enormous jaws and are able to devour both the flesh and bones of the fish at a terrifying rate.



Desert Hopper

This desert living mollusk can grow up to the size of a rabbit. They hop around the desert on a single tough hardened foot, essential for easy movement over the hot surface. During the heat of the day they burrow into the sand but around dawn and dusk they come out to feed on the tough desert plants.



Deathbottle

This plant has fleshy leaves, which are used as a bait to attract the sand hopper over the trap door of the underground feeding pods. The feeding pods - capable of being 30cm (12") deep - are filled with sharp spines and digestive enzymes.



Northern Forest

Along latitudes about 30 to 60 degrees north, the prevailing winds are westerlies that bring huge amounts of rain to the northwest coast of the continent. This creates extensive, lush areas of temperate forest, something similar to the rainforest of northwest USA but much, much more extensive. Lichens have evolved the capacity to grow upright into small shrubs or trees.

Squibbon

These are descended from squid, which have successfully invaded the land. They are an arboreal species that live in simple structures built in the treetops, capitalizing on their natural dexterity and acute stereoscopic vision.



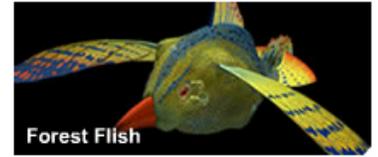
Megasquid

4m tall, weighing 8 tons, with tentacles that extend to 3m and rhino-like skin, the megasquid is a formidable creature. It roams the northern forests of the planet 200 million years hence. All eight of its arms have become legs and look like thick columns, each are a 1/3 of a meter in diameter.



Forest Flish

These are specialized relatives of the ocean flish that have moved successfully inland. They are much smaller than ocean flish, about the size of a wren. This flish's wing beat frequency is 30 cycles per second, and articulating on the shoulder, the wing beat resembles that of a locust.



Slithersucker

The branches of the lichen trees are covered in long, sticky strand-like projections, which hang down like Spanish moss. These strands entangle passing ffish. Once trapped the ffish is hauled up to the branch and digested.



Global Ocean

The earth is now one ocean, circulating one massive continent. The ocean is so massive that from space some views would show the earth as pure blue orb of ocean.

Rainbow Squid

This huge squid, 40m long in total, floats near the surface of the sea. They have an incredibly sophisticated display system, using cells in their skin to create complex patterns. When hunting they can imitate shoals of silver swimmers, flashing down their backs, enticing ffish down to feed.



Ocean Ffish

With birds extinct the skies became an available niche, which became occupied by ffish. They have evolved over millions of years from a cod-like ancestor. They are not like flying fish that we know, but have developed true flight, just as successfully as birds and bats did.



Sharkopath

This Shark grows up to 4m in length and hunts in arrays of dozens of individuals. They have specialized ridges around their heads packed with sense organs. Within the array each individual passes information on the location of prey to the others around it via bioluminescent patches that run along their flanks.



Silverswimmer

Virtually all species of fish have been wiped out, leaving all the niches they filled vacant. Silverswimmers are the group that has evolved to make the most of this opportunity. Their ancestors were microscopic crab larvae, but now they are as diverse in size and shape as fish once were, and they fill the sea.

