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It once rained for two million years, say scientists – 11th March 2024

Level 4

Farmers pray for the heavens to open in times of drought. However, they could never imagine a period of rain lasting two million years. A U.K. geologist has found that 200-300 million years ago, when there was just a single landmass, it rained non-stop for up to two million years. This helped the development of flowers and animals all over the globe. The geologist believes the rain may have been caused by a huge rise in humidity following massive volcanic eruptions.

The geologist based his findings on research conducted on ancient rock in Europe in the 1970s. There were strange deposits in the rock. The geologist said this suggests the long wet period may have been the "trigger" that allowed dinosaurs and modern animals to diversify. He added: "It may have been one of the most important events in the history of life." It could be how many of the creatures we see today started, like turtles, crocodiles, lizards and mammals.

Level 5

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

Dr Ruffell based his findings on research conducted on layers of rock in Europe's Alps in the 1970s and 80s. The data showed unusual deposits in ancient rock that dated back over 200 million years. Ruffell said this suggests the wet period may have been the "trigger" that allowed dinosaurs, and possibly "other members of our modern land-based fauna," to diversify. He added: "It may have been one of the most important events in the history of life." He suggested it was the origin of most classes of creatures like the turtles, crocodiles, lizards and mammals we see today.

Level 6

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."