



Orthoceras Cephalopod Fossil

Ancient creatures from the deep.

Orthoceras are extinct members of the Cephalopods that lived between 259 and 488 million years ago.



The word "Orthoceras" means "straight horn".

The modern "Nautilus" is closely related to the Orthoceras, however the straight shell has developed into the Nautilus's coiled one. The Squid and Octopus are also modern evolutions that came from the Orthoceras.

Orthoceras were subject to two distinctly separate extinctions. The

first was during the Ordovician period in the Triassic era, 488 to 443 million years ago. The second and final extinction during the Devonian period of the Paleozoic era, 416 to 359 million years ago.

Overall this spans a total of 129 million years so the Orthoceras was a spectacularly successful animal in terms of its survival and its ability to adapt.

High quality fossil Orthoceras specimens are found in many parts of the world which indicates how widespread their populations were when they thrived across the world's oceans.



In Morocco in north Africa, large areas of ancient seabeds show huge quantities of Orthoceras fossil specimens, often layered metres deep, which suggest that the last extinction of the species was catastrophic and complete.

Relatively inexpensive, good quality Orthoceras specimens are readily available and are used as ornaments and in jewellery, as well as in display in fossil collections.