

Stromatolites: Rocks with a Glimpse from the Ancient Past

Humans have yet to develop a time machine that can bring us back to the time where life is just starting to see what really happened, so until then we rely on evidences that will provide us a glimpse of the past. Fossils are one of the most reliable evidence, and a tangible proof of existence of certain organisms in a particular time in the history. These are imprints or remains of organisms immortalized in rocks, resins or ambers. Stromatolites are just like that - mounds of rocks alongside marine environments made of layers of calcium carbonate precipitated by activity of ancient cyanobacteria as they use up carbon dioxide in their surroundings. The colonies of cyanobacteria is surrounded by a slimy material that traps the precipitated sediments and minerals that piles up through time, eventually forming these mounds of rock. Stromatolites are considered one of the oldest fossils, with the oldest formed dating as far back as 3.5 billion years ago.

Modern stromatolites are usually found in hypersaline environment where snails and other grazers that can destroy the stromatolites cannot tolerate the salty environment. Their existence were first discovered in 1956 in Shark Bay, Australia. Others were found in western Australia, Brazil, Mexico, the Yellowstone National Park in the United States, and the Bahamas. Freshwater stromatolites are also found in the Yucatan

Peninsula in Mexico, lakes in Canada, Belize, Turkey, and in Southern Australia as well.