

THE DYNAMIC DUO—EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT

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I very frequently hear people say, "Things just aren't the same as they use to be." Many times they are referring to the environment or the quality of a particular part, such as air or water. My reply is, "no they aren't and you shouldn't expect them to be." The usual response is, "say what?" or a long "huh?" This is generally followed by, "well I wish we could go back to the good old days!"

Well, we can't, we never have and we never will, so live with it! The reason is the Earth and the natural environment are not static. They are dynamic and are constantly changing. Whether we are here or not, whether we cause the change or it is natural, the Earth and the environment change. This has been true for the history of the Earth. They have always changed and will always change. Some times the changes are good, in other words we like them, and sometimes they are not so good, in other words we don't like them, but they do occur.

Probably the most dynamic part of the planet is the atmosphere. The weather is constantly changing and as it does we see the affects on other parts of the Earth. Lots of rain causes floods, too little rain causes droughts. Large storms such as tornados or hurricanes change the landscape that they pass over. Think about it, does an area look the same after a flood or drought or after a hurricane passes by? Using all of your scientific expertise you say, "well duh, of course not." While this may not get you the Nobel Prize, you subconsciously realize that a change has occurred. The atmosphere causes rapid changes but it is not the only part of the Earth that changes.

The Earth itself is in constant change. Volcanic activity and earthquakes can cause the surface of Earth to change dramatically. What we have to understand is that the Earth changes at a different rate than we do. Although you many not see much change in an area over a period of years, that doesn't mean change is not going on. Earth changes usually happen at a slow rate compared to our lifetime, so we may not notice them. If we look over large periods of time at what we see in the geologic record, we can see major changes in everything around us - the Earth, the atmosphere, the oceans, and life.

Things just aren't the same as they used to be. No, they are not and maybe that is a good thing. I, for one, don't want to go back to the good old days if I have to go out and chase a *Tyrannosaurus rex* out of my garden. I have enough problems with the squirrels!