

## Astronomical cycles may have influenced animal evolution on Earth

A team of researchers from the United States and New Zealand took a look at how likely species were to go extinct and how likely new species were to appear during a 60-million-year period, long before humans evolved. Upon analyzing fossil data, it seemed to them as if astronomical cycles led to climactic effects that ultimately aligned with new species of plankton appearing and going extinct on Earth.

...

The researchers looked specifically at data on 1,794 fossilized species of zooplankton, and how they appeared and disappeared during the time period from 481 million to 419 million years ago. They compared this to their model of Milankovitch “grand cycles,” regular changes to the shape of the Earth’s orbit around the Sun that occur every 1.3 million and 2.6 million years, that may have had effects on the climate. They thought these cycles could explain statistical changes in the number of new zooplankton species appearing and going extinct.

...

But perhaps it’s not so outlandish to think that cosmic forces could be driving species turnover. [Just last week](#), scientists hypothesized that the orbits of Jupiter and Venus planets could have an influence on our planet’s climate.

...

[C]osmic forces actually might be influencing life here on Earth. How and why, we don’t quite know—but it’s safe to say Earth’s history is influenced by more than just the Moon and the Sun.

*Editor’s note: Read the [full study](#) (behind paywall)*

**Read full, original post:** [Does Earth’s Shifting Orbit Influence How Life Evolves?](#)