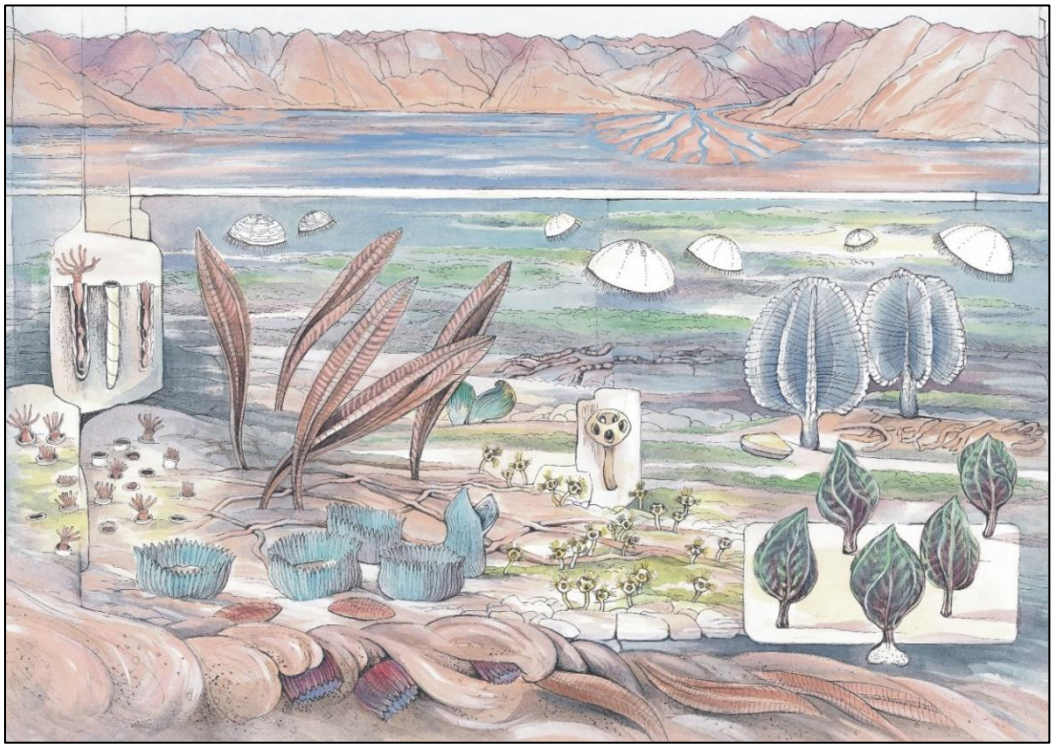
Editor's note: The Thompson Field Forum coming to Namibia

Thompson Field Forums, named in honour of geology researcher James B. Thompson Jr., and organised by the Geological Society of America, deal with earth and planetary science topics under current investigation and active debate (such as *Age and Carving of the Grand Canyon*, *The Geology of Cuba*, and *Melt Segregation and Transfer Mechanisms in the Lower Crust,* to name but a few of the subjects and worldwide destinations of the Forum). To encourage individual and collaborative research, field forums are interdisciplinary, bringing together experts from all over the world to exchange current knowledge and theories. They consist of several days to a week of workshops, discussions and site visits, for which reason they are usually held in a field setting.

This year's Field Forum:
"How to build complex life: Understanding Ediacaran-Cambrian environmental change and the emergence of animals"

will once again (after 2004, when the topic of the day was the evolution of the Kaapvaal Craton and the processes on Early Earth) take place in southern Africa. The late Proterozoic to Cambrian Nama Group and its spectacular crop of fossil organisms, whose unique place in the evolution of life has earned them a place among the IUGS "Second 100" Geological Heritage Sites (Schreiber and Mocke, 2024), makes Namibia an ideal venue for fruitful insights and discussions of this exciting topic. During the transition from the Neoproterozoic eon to the Cambrian period many significant developments took place in the evolution of our planet (Rose *et al*., 2019), with rising oxygen levels causing dramatic environmental changes, only being one of them. To investigate and document this period in earth's history the international *Geological Research through Integrated Neoproterozoic Drilling (*GRIND) progamme was called into being with drilling sites in Brazil, China and Namibia to produce a worldwide network and archive of time-calibrated cores for sharing and research (Rose *et al*., 2019).

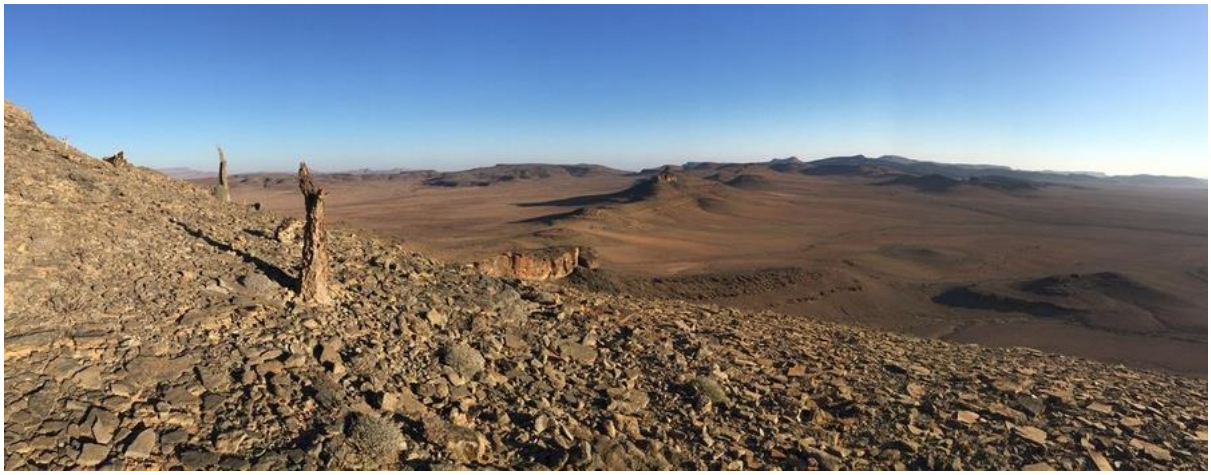


Reconstruction of the late Neoproterozoic palaeoenvironment depicting a shallow sea teeming with new life forms (drawing by C. Marais)

Field Forum Programme

Talks and discussions at the University of Namibia's Southern Campus in Keetmanshoop (25- 29 May 2026) will cover the following subjects, highlighted by keynote speakers, lightning talks and poster sessions:

- Geochronology (Ediacaran–Cambrian age constraints)
- Geochemistry (palaeoenvironmental conditions and oxygenation across the Ediacaran-Cambrian boundary)
- Palaeontology (early animal evolution and biostratigraphy)
- Palaeomagnetism and Palaeogeography (palaeomagnetic signals and global reconstructions)



View from Swartpunt stratigraphically below the Ediacaran - Cambrian boundary (photo: F. Bowyer)

Following the indoor sessions, a two-day field trip (31-31 May 2026) will take up to 40 participants to key locations of the lower and middle Nama Group (Kuibis and Schwarzrand Subgroups) on farms Swartpunt, Swartkloofberg and Sonntagsbrunn near the township of Aus in southern Namibia, to discuss sedimentology and trace fossil record at the visited sites, and the regional placement of the Ediacaran-Cambrian boundary. The event will conclude with a visit of the National Earth Science Museum in Windhoek, which houses a collection of Ediacaran fossils, and a workshop on GRIND-ECT drill cores (1-2 June) at the Geological Survey of Namibia.

Leaders and conveners will be renowned geology researchers

Emmy Smith, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA
Catherine Rose, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Scotland, UK
Francis Macdonald, University of California, Berkeley, USA

Nama fossils at the National Earth Science Museum, Windhoek (photos: M. Meyer)

For more information visit:

https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Events/Thompson/GSA/thompson/current.aspx?hkey=020e5771-aeb9-4c08-8c5f-8b34208cd3a1For

References

Rose, C. V., Prave, A. R., Bergmann, K. D., Condon, D. J., Kasemann, S.A., MacDonald, F. A., Hoffmann, K.-H., Trindade, R. I. F. and Zhu, M. 2019. Project Report: Grinding Through the Ediacaran-Cambrian Transition. *Communications of the Geological Survey of Namibia*, **21**, 1-14.

Schreiber, U. M. and Mocke, H. 2024. Namibia's IUGS Geological Heritage Sites. *Communications of the Geological Survey of Namibia*, **27**, 115-119.