



ICCEE2026

International Conference on the Cambrian Explosion and Extinctions

November 1st–7th, 2026, Nanjing and Xiangxi, China



Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology
Chinese Academy of Sciences



State Key Laboratory of Palaeobiology and
Stratigraphy

Second Circular





ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The Cambrian Period represents a critical time interval in the evolutionary history of the Earth-life system, which was characterized by the explosive radiation of animal phyla and subsequent extinctions of biodiversity in a fluctuating environmental background. The co-evolution of life and environment in the early history of the animal world during the Cambrian holds profound significance for addressing the global changes in the deep time and at present. To promote multidisciplinary research on the Cambrian explosion and extinctions, and to strengthen collaborations and communications among scholars worldwide, we are pleased to invite colleagues and students from all relevant research fields to attend the **International Conference on the Cambrian Explosion and Extinctions**, which will be held in **Nanjing and Xiangxi, China** from **November 1st to 7th, 2026**. This conference will also witness the 75th anniversary of the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (NIGPAS) and the establishment of the Center of Early Life and Astrobiology (CELA) at NIGPAS.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

The conference will focus on frontier themes including the triggers of the Cambrian explosion, the origin and early evolution of animal phyla, the Sinsk and other extinction events, and Cambrian exceptionally preserved fossil Lagerstätten. Participants will exchange cutting-edge advances, research findings and scientific insights to foster interdisciplinary and cross-regional collaborative innovation. Oral presentations at this conference are by invitation only, and the presentation language will be English.

Date	Time	Program	Location
November 1 st	09:00-22:00	Registration and welcome reception	Holiday Inn Nanjing Xuanwu Lake
	14:00-17:50	Workshop on Sponge Early Evolution	Lecture Hall, 3rd Floor, Library Building, NIGPAS
November 2 nd	09:00-17:00	Opening ceremony and plenary session I	Lecture Hall, 2nd Floor, Nanjing Museum of Paleontology, NIGPAS
November 3 rd	Whole Day	Traveling from Nanjing to Xiangxi	Crowne Plaza Xiangxi
November 4 th	08:00-18:00	Field excursion I: The Huayuan Biota and Cryogenian-Cambrian palaeontology and stratigraphy in Xiangxi	
November 5 th	09:00-17:00	Plenary session II and scientific sessions	Crowne Plaza Xiangxi
November 6 th	08:00-18:00	Field excursion II: The Chongqing Biota and Silurian palaeontology and stratigraphy in Xiushan	
November 7 th	Whole Day	Departure	



PLENARY SPEAKERS

(sorted by surname alphabetically)



Prof. Jean-Bernard Caron

Royal Ontario Museum, Canada

50 years of discovery - Burgess Shale research at ROM



Prof. Peiyun Cong

Yunnan University, China

Tracing the Cambrian Explosion into the Ediacaran



Prof. Philip C. J. Donoghue FRS

University of Bristol, United Kingdom

The timing and tempo of metazoan diversification



Prof. Douglas H. Erwin

Santa Fe Institute, United States

A macroevolutionary triad: novelty and innovation during the Ediacaran-Cambrian radiation



Prof. Diego C. Garcia-Bellido

Adelaide University and South Australian Museum, Australia

The Emu Bay Shale fauna and its portrayal as Australia Post stamps



Prof. Junfeng Guo

Chang'an University, China

Earliest siphuncle-bearing cephalopod from the early Cambrian



Prof. Tae-Yoon S. Park

Korea Polar Research Institute, Republic of Korea

A new collection of Sirius Passet biota and its implications for the evolution of early meiofauna



Prof. John R. Paterson

University of New England, Australia

On the origin of trilobites

PLENARY SPEAKERS

(sorted by surname alphabetically)



Prof. Graham A. Shields

University College London, United Kingdom



Prof. Michael Steiner

Shandong University of Science and Technology, China

How soft-tissued is soft-body preservation?



Dr. Zhixin Sun

University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Global trilobite diversity dynamics across the early Paleozoic



Prof. Xiaomei Wang

Research Institute of Petroleum Exploration and Development, PetroChina



Prof. Rachel A. Wood FRS

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

The Sinsk mass extinction: oxygenation and ecological re-structuring



Dr. Han Zeng

Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, CAS, China

The Cambrian Huayuan biota and the Sinsk mass extinction



Prof. Zhifei Zhang

Northwest University, China

Lophotrochozoans during Cambrian Explosion: engineering from animal skeletons to reefal ecosystem



Prof. Min Zhu, CAS Academician

Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, CAS



Prof. Andrey Yu. Zhuravlev

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

The early Cambrian Sinsk biota and formation, Siberian Platform

WORKSHOP ON SPONGE EARLY EVOLUTION

(sorted by presentation order)



Prof. Dirk Erpenbeck

Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich, Germany

Phylogenomics and the molecular clock of sponges



Prof. Joachim Reitner

Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Lower Saxony, Germany

Concepts on sponge origin and the Precambrian record of possible sponge fossils



Dr. Cui Luo

Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, CAS

Cambrian evolution of sponges — record from siliciclastic facies



Prof. Andrey Yu. Zhuravlev

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

Advances in the study of archaeocyaths



Dr. Christine Schönberg

National Sun Yat-sen University (Kaohsiung), Taiwan, China

Functional morphology of living sponges and its implications for paleobiological studies



Prof. Sally Leys

University of Alberta, Canada

Ecology of extant sponges (from pumping activity to communities) and its implications for paleobiological studies



Dr. Hao Yun

Northwest University, China

Sponge-like animals coeval with early sponges

WORKSHOP ON SPONGE EARLY EVOLUTION

Sponges, as one of the most basal animal lineages, diverged during the Neoproterozoic and have maintained substantial biodiversity and ecological importance throughout the Phanerozoic. Their evolutionary success can be traced back to the early Cambrian, when they first became dominant components of reef systems, flourished on siliciclastic seafloors across a range of water depths, and gave rise to the first crown groups. However, compared with other animal lineages such as arthropods, the evolutionary trajectory and driving factors of early sponges remain far less explored. This workshop brings sponge biologists and paleontologists together, aiming to spark dialogue across different fields of sponge research so that the phylogeny, ecology, and mechanisms underlying early sponge evolution can be better understood. This workshop will be held [in the afternoon of November 1st, 2026 at NIGPAS](#). Seven invited talks in two sessions will address state-of-the-art developments and key scientific questions across different fields, followed by an open discussion session welcoming all participants interested in sponge biology and paleobiology.

TIME	TOPICS (PROVISIONAL)	INVITED SPEAKERS
14:00-14:25	Phylogenomics and the molecular clock of sponges	Prof. Dirk Erpenbeck Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich
14:25-14:50	Concepts on sponge origin and the Precambrian record of possible sponge fossils	Prof. Joachim Reitner Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Lower Saxony
14:50-15:15	Cambrian evolution of sponges — record from siliciclastic facies	Dr. Cui Luo Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, CAS
15:15-15:40	Advances in the study of archaeocyaths	Prof. Andrey Yu. Zhuravlev Lomonosov Moscow State University
15:40-15:50	Coffee Break	
15:50-16:15	Functional morphology of living sponges and its implications for paleobiological studies	Dr. Christine Schönberg National Sun Yat-sen University (Kaohsiung)
16:15-16:40	Ecology of extant sponges (from pumping activity to communities) and its implications for paleobiological studies	Prof. Sally Leys University of Alberta
16:40-17:05	Sponge-like animals coeval with early sponges	Dr. Hao Yun Northwest University (Xi'an)
17:05-17:50	Open Discussion	

FIELD EXCURSIONS

Field Excursion I

The Huayuan Biota and Cryogenian-Cambrian palaeontology and stratigraphy in Xiangxi

Date: November 4th, 2026

Key stops: Huayuan Biota fossil site, Cambrian Furongian/Paibian GSSP, and Cryogenian-Cambrian strata in Huayuan and Guzhang counties, Xiangxi

Fossil of the Huayuan biota



Arthropod with soft tissue
Surusicaris sp. nov.
Zeng H *et al.* 2026 *Nature*

Field Excursion II

The Chongqing Biota and Silurian palaeontology and stratigraphy in Xiushan

Date: November 6th, 2026

Key stops: Chongqing Biota fossil sites, Silurian fish exhibition, fish fossil field station, and Silurian strata in Xiushan County, Chongqing

Fossil of the Chongqing biota



Oldest osteichthyan
Eosteus chongqingensis
Zhu YA *et al.* 2026 *Nature*

Note: No fee will be charged for the field excursions, and lunch will be provided in the field. As the number of participants will be limited, the final participant list will be determined in order of registration on a first-come, first-served basis.

Deadline for field excursion sign-up: October 15th, 2026

LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

CONFERENCE VENUES

Nanjing: **NIGPAS** — Opening ceremony and plenary session

Xiangxi: **Crowne Plaza Xiangxi** — Scientific sessions

Note: Conference check-in will take place at Holiday Inn Nanjing Xuanwu Lake.

ACCOMMODATION

Nanjing: Holiday Inn Nanjing Xuanwu Lake, 199 Longpan Road, Nanjing City

Xiangxi: Crowne Plaza Xiangxi, 7 Wulingshan Avenue, Jishou City

Note: All participants shall submit accommodation requests upon registration. The conference secretariat will arrange hotel room reservations accordingly.

MEAL

The conference venues are surrounded by authentic restaurants. Meal vouchers will also be available at Xiangxi at the registration desk. Lunch is provided in the field excursions.

TRANSPORTATION

Nanjing: **Flight** — Nanjing Lukou International Airport (NKG) (45 min); **Railway** — Nanjing South Railway Station (25 min), Nanjing Railway Station (15 min).

Xiangxi: **Flight** — Xiangxi Biancheng Airport (DXJ) (50 min), Zhangjiajie Hehua International Airport (DYG) (2 h 20 min), Tongren Fenghuang Airport (TEN) (55 min), Huaihua Zhijiang Airport (HJJ) (1 h 30 min); **Railway** — Jishou East Railway Station (20 min).

Note: Time within the brackets is the driving time required between hub and venue. Please contact the conference secretariat or fill out the reply slip to schedule pick-ups.

COST

No registration fee will apply for this conference and its field excursions. All expenses, including accommodation, meals and transportation, are to be borne by the participants.

REGISTRATION

Please complete the online registration form at the following link (Chinese participants) <https://docs.qq.com/sheet/DTGN1SVBVenRwc25C> OR return the conference reply slip at the end of this circular (international participants) to tywang@nigpas.ac.cn to register for the conference and field excursions. Limited on-site registration will be available on reasonable request, but these participants may not be provided with enough conference material in print.



KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

October 15th, 2026 — Deadline for online registration and field excursion sign-up

October 20th, 2026 — Release of the Third Circular of the conference

November 1st-3rd, 2026 — Nanjing section of the conference

November 3rd-7th, 2026 — Xiangxi section of the conference

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations are invited only. Each plenary talk will be allocated 30 minutes, and keynote talk will be allocated 25 minutes, including Q&A. Please provide slides in PowerPoint (.pptx) or PDF file format (.pdf) ideally in aspect ratio 16:9 before sessions.

ORGANIZATION

HOST

Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, CAS (NIGPAS)

State Key Laboratory of Palaeobiology and Stratigraphy (LPS)

Chengjiang Palaeontological Station (CPS)

CO-ORGANIZERS

People's Government of the Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture

People's Government of the Huayuan County

People's Government of the Xiushan County

Xiangxi Global Geopark

Chongqing Palaeontological Research Institute

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Chair: Prof. Maoyan Zhu, CAS Academician (NIGPAS)

Executive Chair: Dr. Han Zeng (NIGPAS)

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Presentation: Jialin Zhao (NIGPAS)

jlzhao@nigpas.ac.cn

Conference Reply Slip

First name		Last name	
Title		Gender	
Affiliation			
Citizenship			
E-mail		Phone number (for contact in China)	
Date of arrival†		Date of departure	
Place of arrival	☐ Nanjing ☐ Xiangxi	Place of departure‡	☐ Nanjing ☐ Xiangxi
Accompanying guests			
Hotel rooms required			
Diet	☐ Normal ☐ Vegetarian ☐ Please specify on the right		
Title of presentation			
Authors of presentation			
Field excursion	☐ Cambrian Huayuan Biota, strata and Paibian GSSP of Huayuan County, Hunan ☐ Silurian Chongqing Biota and strata of Xiushan County, Chongqing		
Visa	☐ Unnecessary ☐ Required	Invitation letter	☐ Unnecessary ☐ Required
Passport ID*		Date of birth*	
Other requirements			

†You may visit NIGPAS before the conference in late October.

‡There are daily flights between Xiangxi and Beijing and flights between Zhangjiajie and major Chinese cities.

*If necessary, please provide your passport ID and date of birth if you need a visa or an invitation letter.

**ICCEE
2026**

