

RECONSTRUCTING AN EDIACARAN ICON.

ABSTRACT

THE EDIACARAN FROND *Rangia* Gürich, 1930 was the first large and complex pre-Cambrian fossil named and described anywhere in the world. It was discovered in S-W Namibia and continues to represent one of the universal images of the Ediacara biota today. *Rangia* is the type genus of an extinct clade that appeared near the beginning of the evolutionary origins of large, complex organisms that prospered during the late Neoproterozoic. The oldest Rangiomorphs, appear in the deep water, marine Avalon biota in Newfoundland and England and have now been recorded in N-W Canada. The clade rapidly diversified, with representatives such as *Rangia* living in the shallow water marine sequences of Russia and Australia. However it is in the Nama sequence that the disappearance *Rangia* can be dated towards the close of the Ediacaran. It therefore represents a keystone Ediacaran taxon, but the relatively few specimens have significantly hindered an accurate reconstruction and thus, the form and lifestyle of *Rangia* were likely to be an iconic fallacy. Discovery of more than 100 specimens of *Rangia* in two gutter casts recovered from Farm Aar in southern Namibia significantly expands this data set, and the superb preservation of internal and external features on these specimens permit new interpretations of its morphology and lifestyle. The presentation will elaborate these discoveries and present a new reconstruction of *Rangia*.

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