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Sommario/riassunto

Concern about the effects of global change on our planet's future has driven much research into the last few thousand years of earth history. In contrast, this volume takes a much longer viewpoint to provide a historical perspective to recent and future global change. Over 40 international specialists investigate the reaction of life to global environmental changes, from Cretaceous times to the turn of the century. During this time earth's climate has changed from a very warm, 'greenhouse' phase with no significant ice sheets to today's 'ice-house' world. A wide spectrum of animal, plant and protistan life is discussed, encompassing terrestrial, shallow-marine and deep-marine realms. Each chapter considers a particular taxonomic group, looking first at the general picture and then focusing on more specialized aspects such as extinctions, diversity and biogeography. This volume will form an invaluable reference for researchers and graduate students in paleontology, geology, biology, oceanography and climatology.