

The SurvivalArtistMicroStars: the paleoscale longevity heroes

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Image created by Franzika Jebok

As we go through life, we often think about our age: when we are very young, we long to be older and have the freedom and privileges enjoyed by adults; when we are older with lots of responsibilities, we wish we were younger with more freedom and fewer worries. On average we have about 80 years to think about age, and some humans even live longer than 100 years. Reaching 100 is usually cause for a big party! But some organisms have only short lives – the mayfly lives for only 1 day! And then others live much longer than us: bowhead whales can live more than 200 years and glass sponges and corals can live thousands of years. Long life – longevity – is usually associated with slow growth and reproduction. Some microbes are the masters of longevity and can grow extremely slowly or even hibernate for very long periods of time. Although we cannot be certain how old the oldest of microbes can be, we think that some may be hundreds of thousands – perhaps even millions – of years old. *Let's learn about longevity, the microbes who have lived through many of the major events of our planet, and how they do it.*