

Tetrapod from Joggins, Nova Scotia

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This special fossil is a tetrapod vertebrate from the Upper Carboniferous Period, or more simply, a four-legged animal with a spinal cord who lived 300 to 325 million years ago. Back then, the lands of Nova Scotia lay close to the equator and were mainly warm swamps and river flood plains where the large fern-like trees of Joggins grew. The tetrapod roamed these swamps in search of food and eventually died at the edge of the water. This can be observed because the tetrapod exposed skull

and upper body have little distortion as the gentle burial by sand and clay particles entombed the body to help create the beautifully preserved fossil.

Ancient amphibians and some modern reptiles retain bony scales in a ventral armour of v-shaped rows along the belly, a structure of use in protecting the low-slung body while travelling over rough ground as can be seen in this specimen.