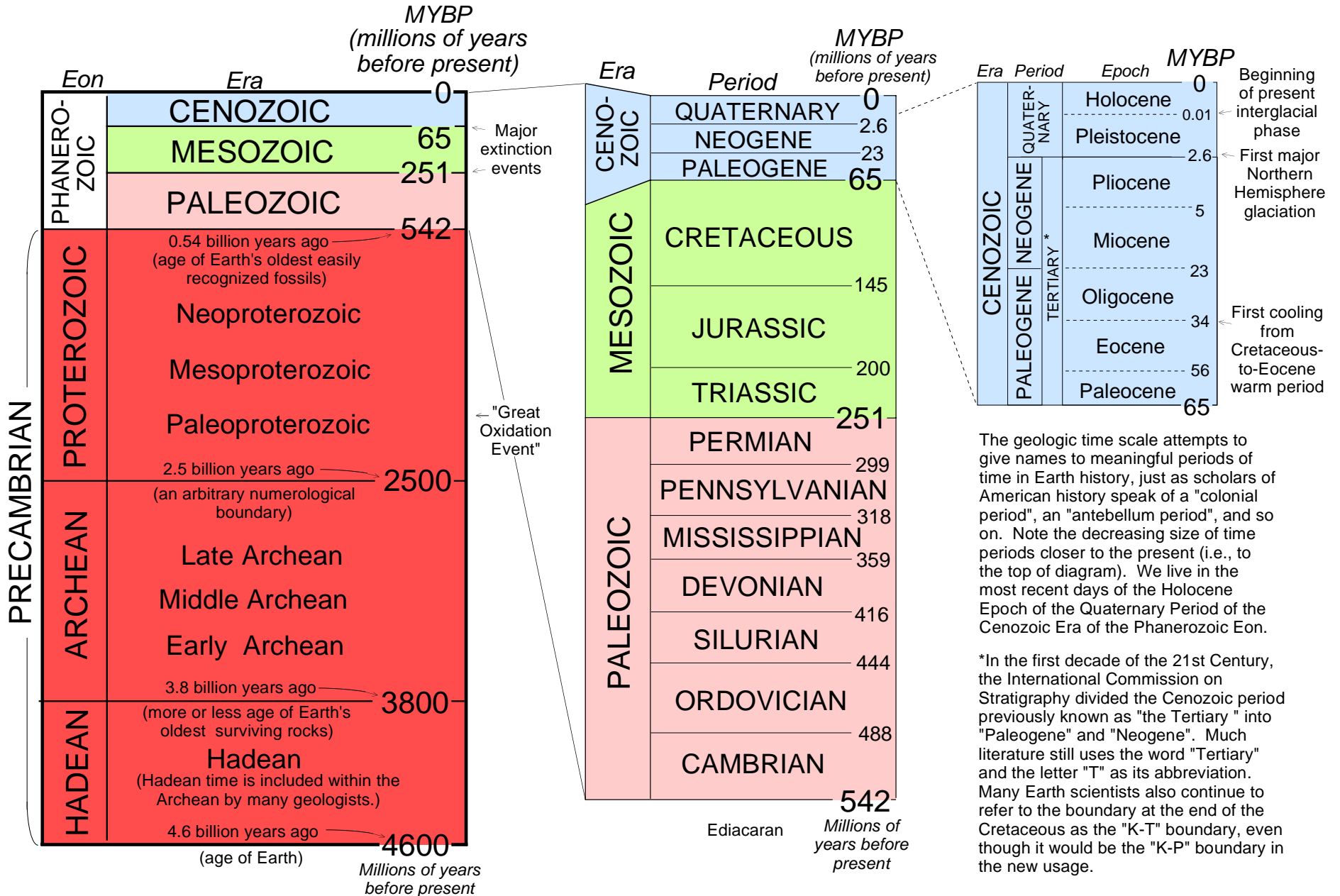


The standard geologic time scale



The geologic time scale attempts to give names to meaningful periods of time in Earth history, just as scholars of American history speak of a "colonial period", an "antebellum period", and so on. Note the decreasing size of time periods closer to the present (i.e., to the top of diagram). We live in the most recent days of the Holocene Epoch of the Quaternary Period of the Cenozoic Era of the Phanerozoic Eon.

*In the first decade of the 21st Century, the International Commission on Stratigraphy divided the Cenozoic period previously known as "the Tertiary" into "Paleogene" and "Neogene". Much literature still uses the word "Tertiary" and the letter "T" as its abbreviation. Many Earth scientists also continue to refer to the boundary at the end of the Cretaceous as the "K-T" boundary, even though it would be the "K-P" boundary in the new usage.