Cenozoic Plate Tectonics

Cenozoic Era

- The Cenozoic Era began around 65 million years ago, but it is the most recent era, and therefore scientists know most about it.
- The Rocky Mountains, Cascades volcanic arc, and San Andreas fault in California were formed during this period of time.
- Most plate tectonic activity involved continents coming apart but smaller regions did come together to create familiar mountain ranges, such as the Himalayas.

Study Tip

Many other Concepts in Earth Science go into further detail explaining the geological changes. Refer to them if needed.

Ice Ages

- As continents split apart, the climate began to cool down and the water around Antarctica spread around the world, causing ice ages.
- Glaciers advanced and retreated four times during the Pleistocene ice ages about 2.6 million years ago.
- The Pleistocene ice ages also guided the evolution of Cenozoic life, including humans.

Glacial ice at its maximum during the Pleistocene ice ages

Concept Check

- What was the plate tectonic activity like during the Cenozoic era?
- What was going on during the Pleistocene ice ages?

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