

= The Sixth Extinction =

" The Sixth Extinction " is the first episode of the seventh season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It was first shown on the Fox network on November 7 , 1999 , in the United States . The episode was written by Chris Carter and directed by Kim Manners . " The Sixth Extinction " earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @.@ 6 , being watched by 17 @.@ 82 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed to positive reviews from critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work . In the episode , Assistant Director Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) and Michael Kritschgau (John Finn) work desperately in an attempt to discover what is wrong with Mulder , who is imprisoned by his own frenetic brain activity , but they are unaware of Agent Diana Fowley ' s (Mimi Rogers) duplicity . In the meanwhile , Scully is hunting for an ancient artifact in Africa .

" The Sixth Extinction " helped to explore new aspects of the series ' overarching mythology and was the second episode in a trilogy of episodes featuring Mulder ' s severe reaction to the appearance of an alien artifact . The episode was written due to series creator Chris Carter ' s fascination with the possibility that extraterrestrials were involved in the great extinctions that had happened millions of years ago .

= = Plot = =

On the coast of Côte d 'Ivoire , Scully sits in her tent studying detailed photographs of the spacecraft half @-@ buried on the beach nearby . A figure , the Primitive African Man , mysteriously appears before suddenly vanishing , after which Scully ' s tent is swarmed by flying insects . Back in the United States , Walter Skinner visits a delusional Fox Mulder , who is being kept in a padded cell at a Georgetown hospital . Mulder seemingly attacks Skinner , but actually covertly passes him a torn shred of his hospital gown reading , " HELP ME " .

Scully is visited by Dr. Amina Ngebe , Solomon Merkmellen ' s former colleague who warns Scully to not tell any of the locals about the swarm or the Primitive African Man , although word is already out on the " African internet " . Soon afterwards , one of the locals working on excavating the ship is apparently scalded by boiling seawater . With the arrival of Dr. Barnes another " plague " occurs ? that night the ocean turns blood red .

Skinner revisits a heavily drugged Mulder , who cannot talk but writes " Kritschgau " . Skinner goes to visit Kritschgau , now unemployed and living in a low @-@ cost apartment , and convinces him to visit the hospital with him . Once there , Kritschgau believes Mulder has alien induced mind reading abilities and injects him with a drug (phenytoin) to slow down his brain activity . Later Diana Fowley and his doctor arrive , and with his mind @-@ reading abilities , Mulder is able to tell Skinner that he knows about him being indebted to Krycek , and Diana Fowley ' s connections with the Cigarette Smoking Man .

Scully , with Dr. Barnes ' help , is able to translate some of the spaceship , which contains information on genetics and various religions . Dr. Barnes ' behavior becomes increasingly erratic however and , armed with a machete , he refuses to let Scully or Ngebe leave . He soon realizes that the craft is bringing dead fish back to life , and Scully and Ngebe take the opportunity to knock him out and escape . Scully sees the vanishing man again in the car as they drive off .

Kritschgau and Skinner put Mulder under additional tests to verify his abnormal brain activity . They again inject Mulder with phenytoin , but this time they are caught by Fowley and Mulder goes into a seizure . Meanwhile Dr. Barnes , in a bizarre type of experiment , kills his driver , but the driver soon reanimates and kills him instead . Scully flies back to the U.S. and visits Mulder at the hospital . On the African coast , Ngebe arrives with the police , finding Dr. Barnes dead and the spaceship gone .

= = Production = =

Frank Spotnitz said of the episode 's origins , " We 've destroyed all the stuff about Mulder 's father , the project , and the Syndicate . All the things that had sustained us for six years were suddenly gone . We had no crutches . From that point on , every time we sat down to write a mythology show , we knew it was going to be a completely different challenge . " Chris Carter saw the episode as a transitional episode , stating " I felt that , with " The Sixth Extinction " , I was just playing a supporting role and that the episode , essentially the middle episode of a three @-@ episode arc , was just a transitional episode to get us to ' Amor Fati ' , which was really less about the mythology and more about Mulder 's choices in life . "

David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson both had other commitments as the season began , resulting in the producers delaying filming for this episode . It ended up being filmed third in the season , after the episodes " Hungry " and " The Goldberg Variation " . Carter wrote the episode at the same time as Duchovny was working on the next episode , " The Sixth Extinction II : Amor Fati " . Kim Manners said preparations were confusing since it wasn 't known at the time how the storyline would unfold . Spotnitz said of the end result , " For me , it was a lot like a fifties monster movie with Scully out on the beach with this guy going nuts with a machete , the bug attacks , and the sea of blood . Yeah , it was supposed to be serious business but , overall , I thought it was shaping up as a pretty entertaining hour . "

The producers had to move the filming of the beach sequences from the previous episodes due to changes in the tides at that time of year . Similar to the previous episode , the spaceship was computer @-@ generated . The sequence where the locals are boiled by the ocean water was accomplished using underwater filming of stuntmen under various degrees of make up . Fifty thousand dead crickets were rented from a local entomologist for the scene where Scully 's tent was attacked by bugs . The live insects were portrayed by blowing popcorn and packing foam at Anderson with fans and editing it into insects in post production .

A large portion of the episode was based on the ancient astronaut theory , which proposes that intelligent extraterrestrial beings have visited Earth in antiquity or prehistory and made contact with humans . Frank Spotnitz later remarked that he was astounded at how little negative fan mail the show received , despite the fact that the " Biogenesis " / " The Sixth Extinction " / " Amor Fati " story arc heavily hinted that aliens were the originators of the notion of God and religion . He credited the manner in which the show handled this delicate subject , saying , " Often in the past , we 've done stuff where I was sure we would get angry letters . But we rarely do . And the reason is because of the way we handle things . In ' Amor Fati ' we treated the religious side with respect . " The ancient astronaut themes were later revisited in the two season nine episodes " Provenance " and " Providence . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Sixth Extinction " was first shown in the United States on November 7 , 1999 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 6 , with a 16 share , meaning that roughly 10 @.@ 6 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 16 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 17 @.@ 82 million viewers and was the most watched episode of the seventh season in the United States . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on May 7 , 2000 , and received 1 @.@ 00 million viewers and was the third most watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Something is driving Mulder insane . Something he 's been searching for . Something he shouldn 't have found . " The episode was later included on The X @-@ Files Mythology , Volume 3 ? Colonization , a DVD collection that contains episodes involved with the alien Colonist 's plans to take over the earth .

= = = Reviews = = =

" The Sixth Extinction " received mixed to positive reviews from critics . Tom Kessenich , in his book *Examination : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @-@ Files* gave the episode a positive review , noting that the episode takes the themes of " Biogenesis " and " runs with them " . Ken Tucker of *Entertainment Weekly* awarded the episode a " B + " . Tucker praised series creator Chris Carter 's writing ability , stating that " the kickoff episode suggests the author 's limitless imagination for sustaining his alien @-@ nation tropes " . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* , rated the episode three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . The two called the episode " the most arresting season opener in years " and noted that it " promises that maybe there 's life in the old mythology yet . " Shearman and Pearson , however , did critique the lack of finality to the episode , but attributed most of this to the fact that the episode was the second of a three @-@ part mythology tale . Den of Geek writer Nina Sordi ranked " The Sixth Extinction , " along with " Biogenesis " and " The Sixth Extinction II : Amor Fati , " as the fifth best episode of the series , writing , " it is evident that as [The X @-@ Files] progressed , the episodes surrounding those storylines and the breaking points Mulder and Scully endured push them further and further towards total , irreversible defeat . This is especially poignant when viewing this anxiety inducing trio of episodes . " Monica S. Kuebler of *Exclaim* magazine called " The Sixth Extinction " , along with " Biogenesis " and " Amor Fati " , one of the " best " episodes during the show 's " colonization " phase . Kenneth Silber of *Space.com* wrote positively of the episode , hoping that it foreshadowed answers to come , writing " As the middle installment of a three @-@ part story and what was then thought to be the final season premiere of The X @-@ Files , ' The Sixth Extinction ' is suffused with a somber pre @-@ apocalyptic mood , but one vivified by the possibility that soon we 'll have answers to the most important outstanding mysteries of the series . "

Not all reviews were so positive . Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . She noted that " Mulder 's situation is handled just poorly " and argued that Mulder 's illness was created solely to provide a cross @-@ season cliffhanger . Todd VanDerWerff of *The A.V. Club* awarded the episode a " C " and called it a " weird bridge " . Largely , he criticized the episode for featuring " no real twists or complications here " in lieu of " things just [?] getting worse along a linear path " .