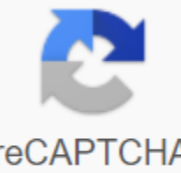


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Paleontology book pdf

Read Tell Us About Wonderful Life by Stephen J. Gould. As I approached my life as a mature scientist, Stephen J. Gould was a major force in paleontology. He was considered almost half-afraid. He wrote some good books. He writes very well, but the book that touched me the most was this one that actually became an international bestseller. A wonderful life about the Burgess slate, which is a deposit of Cambrian age. Cambrian is the division of geological time - the first major separation of bearings of numerous animal fossils that we can easily recognize. The base of Cambrian is now 542 million years old, and it lasted for 50 million years or so, and that's when abundant marine life as we know it really got going. That is, the first appearance as fossils of many ancestors of living things. The beasts I was working on, trilobites, came out during Cambrian. The Burgess slate was discovered many years ago in Canada, in the state of British Columbia, and it was known to contain fossils of all kinds of soft-bodied organisms. Usually fossils are only made of bones and shells - solid pieces, if you like - but this deposit has preserved soft remains. Worms and organisms of this kind have survived as fossils, and they certainly included some extraordinary looking animals. Remarkable life gave a record of the groundbreaking research that was going on in these fossils in the 70s and 80s. Gould, who has always loved making grandiose statements, claimed he had reimagined the whole story through Burgess's slate. He certainly made it very famous. And what was his reinvention? Well, he thought there was more diversity in Cambrian life, which he called inequality, than he does now. In other words, we all have an idea of the tree of life wrong. Usually you think of tree life as bushes and branches that get richer up, don't you? Whereas, in fact, he says, it's more like a Christmas tree: thicker at the bottom. There were many hopeful monsters in Cambrian, many of them very strange-looking animals, which he describes as strange miracles, and he claimed there was more variety than there is now. It is very touching to describe them as hopeful monsters. Well, they hoped in the sense that one lived rather than the other, then the story of life might have been different, because other creatures would have evolved, not those that did. In fact, maybe we wouldn't be here now: something else will be here, not. It was a very attractive idea and sold many, many copies in 1989 and made Gould even more famous. And was he right? No, basically. Yes. But what he did was offer an area of research that I pursued with my colleagues for a number of years to test the idea. he suggested a stimulating idea that a lot of people people Followed. He argued that instead of demonstrating it, so we showed after many studies the work was that inequality was surprisingly broad in Cambrian, but not more so today. A lot of research has been done in an attempt to prove or disprove Gould. It was a very important book for us, because paleontologists, in addition to those working on dinosaurs, can be seen as people working on fairly obscure things that have long since gone extinct, but it has put us more on the front pages. This was perhaps very good for paleontology, even if it was not right in interpretation. Read now you have dinosaurs Steve Brusatte and Michael Benton. This is because you have to put a book of dinosaurs in. I have worked on trilobites for years and I eventually wrote my book Trilobite on my favorite animals. Like most paleontologists, I'm a little indignant at the grip that dinosaurs have on the popular imagination, although I fully understand that they are such fantastic animals that it's not surprising. So I struggled with my own campaign to try to put trilobites out there with dinosaurs, which I was exceptionally unfortunate at doing. There are a thousand and one book dinosaurs and more are sold in the Natural History Museum than all the other books put together. Kids love dinosaurs. But this is a book of dinosaurs by two people who really know their dinosaurs, which is why I chose it. What do they tell us about them? Well, it's all about different types of dinosaurs and how they lived. It is clear that dinosaurs did almost everything that mammals did. There were large shepherds, herbivores, carnivores and small insect-eaters. Any kind of vore you would like to mention is being done by dinosaurs long before mammals invented their own different methods for doing so. So one of the preconceptions this book gets rid of is you know the old expressions: we don't have to be dinosaurs, this company shouldn't be a dinosaur? I know things like that. It's complete nonsense. Dinosaurs were superbly well adapted and probably would have survived, and we would never have had a chance if not for their unfortunate, as Monty Python said, the demise. And what does this book tell us that it's amazing? I suppose it's the sheer variety of things, and now, of course, how widely known they are. They are found on almost every continent - there have even been recent reports in Antarctica. You would be surprised to learn that dinosaurs, supposedly reptiles and supposedly cold-blooded, can live as far north as Greenland. I'd be very surprised, yes. Well, here you are. It's something that really seems amazing. Obviously we know a lot about them, but there's a lot we don't know, do we? There is that amazing pair of huge forearms just as you go to the dinosaur in the museum, and the rest were never found. Of course, there are many, many dinosaurs that are known from multiple fragments because that's what you have with fossils, especially with huge fossils if you think about it. The bigger the animal, the less likely you are to get it all preserved. Actually, was it cold in Greenland in those days? Well, the climate was much warmer then and that's one of the vital facts we need to think about when we're considering global warming now, of course. The climate is not just changing now, it has changed in the past, and is it different this time from how it has changed in the past? Is it? I think that's true. There have been times when carbon dioxide levels have been high in the past, but there has never been a time when carbon dioxide levels were high due to the burning of mostly organic carbon that was hidden in the geological record. Coal and oil in particular. Are you afraid of that? Well, I don't welcome that. No one knows. Read, I'll tell you the suffering. You don't have to talk about dinosaurs anymore. It's time to go for Harry Whittington's Trilobites. yes, now we've got to important animals, the ones I've spent many years training. At sea they were just as important, some say, dominant, although I prefer to think of the sea as a kind of collaborative ecosystem. But they really were a very important group of organisms that lived for almost 300 million years, although there are people in the world who have not heard of them. Have. What's it? There were, unfortunately. They were arthropods, four-legged animals very remotely associated with crustaceans, crabs and lobsters. They are probably most similar superficially to a huge woodlice. At least some of them were. They were extremely diverse. So they were big, weren't they? They can be up to a yard long. Most of them weren't. Most of them were really quite small and would sit comfortably in the palm of your hand. And some were tiny. And why are they important? Well, how important it is to know what the seas were like in ancient times, trilobites were one of the most important animals living there. They tell us about ancient geography because different trilobites lived in different parts of the world, they tell us about the climate because some trilobites liked to live in warm water and some did not, they tell us how deep the water was. In short, they help to paint a picture of the ancient environment. There aren't many books about trilobites. Mine is probably the most interesting read, he says modestly. But Whittington was my old professor. He died very recently, and he was, you might say, Mr. Trilobite. There was no one who knew so much or published so much about trilobites as Harry Whittington. He was in charge of my doctoral thesis, so of course he should place in my five books. Made made coincide with us at any moment. No no no no. You have trilobites living with the aforementioned Burgess shale animals; Once they're extinct, you have the growth of dinosaurs that died out in mass extinction at the end of the Cretaceous period, 65 million years ago, and only then do you have the growth of mammals. And we humans were among the last to show up. What were the seas like when they had trilobites in them? Well, they were more like them now than you imagined. There was a tropical area and a cold area. There were deep waters with blind creatures in the depths of the sea and there were even coral reefs for some of the history of trilobites. But although the seas were similar, many of the characters who lived in the seas were very different. Some of the animals from Burgess Shale included large monsters - a very, very strange kind of predator with grasping claws. Later, there would be many relatives of nautilus, of whom we have one living representative today, the pearl nautilus. In the past, there were hundreds of different species. They were probably very important predators. Trilobites were around until the first fish, but when they appeared they eventually included many strange armoured shapes with large large plates above their bodies - really quite formidable - and trilobites, as if in response, became extremely prickly about that time. Some of them are like hedgehogs. they are so prickly. They are very popular with collectors now. They have great monetary value. How much for a spiky trilobite? Well prepared, dug out of the rock, you can pay two or three thousand dollars for a good trilobite, but you need to go to the right place. Where do I go? You can go to the Houston Fair, for example, or you could go to Morocco, where I just had with David Attenborough, to look at the land of the trilobites where these things are collected from the rocks. Read Life on a Young Planet, Andrew Knoll. This is a book about the beginning of things. So we're going back in time, not just before dinosaurs, not just in front of trilobites, but to the very, very early days on the planet. What do we call this period? It's commonly called Precambrian, which happens over 3.500 million years ago, but the fact is that it was in some ways the most mysterious part of the history of life on the planet. When Charles Darwin was around, no fossils had been around since that period. What has happened over the last 30 years or so is that more and more discoveries have been made in these pre-Cambrian breeds. Why now? Because of the new methods mainly, but also because people have taken the trouble to look properly. Many fossils are things you might expect as algae, bacteria, so they are very small and not easy to find. Knoll tells the story of development very well years of our planet and how life actually shaped it, because not many people know that it was the very life that made the planet habitable for animals. In the early days there was little oxygen, which of course all animals, including us, need to breathe. In fact, early life evolved and appeared in the absence of oxygen. It was only when there were organisms that were able to carry out photosynthesis - mostly bacteria to start with, and then algae - that oxygen was released. In other words, we would have died of suffocation in the early days of the planet. It took two billion years of work by these organisms to oxygenate the planet enough for our species of life, including trilobites, dinosaurs and ourselves to evolve. Two billion? Two billion. Two thousand million years, yes. So you can't overestimate the importance of this early period in making the planet that it is today. It is very important when we around with the atmosphere, as we do, to understand that what we have is actually the product of this inefficient and long period of planetary evolution. I don't think people realize how long the journey has been to get to where we are now. Read finally the extinction of Douglas H Erwin. The story of life is not only what new things appear, but it is also the story of things dying out in certain periods. Most people have heard of the death of dinosaurs 65 million years ago, but the biggest death of them was at the end of Perm, 250 million years ago. It was when life really almost died out. More than 90 percent of the species died out, the seas were poisoned, and life was put through a kind of squeezer from which it had just come out, and all that appeared afterwards had to go through this squeeze. It was the most important extinction event in the history of the planet, no question. What went wrong? Or what went right? It's worth thinking about what we're doing with the planet right now. You'll know about continental drift, and while all the continents have come together in one big massive supercontinent called Pangaea, which eventually had a terrible impact on the climate. The deserts grew, and there were very few places where a rich, diverse life could continue. Vertebrates were reduced to very few species that could walk from one end of the earth to the other. So we started again? Has there been a whole evolution before? Yes. Trilobites were one of the victims, but some things survived, of course, and these things gave rise to the rest of their lives. He's dumping the whole calendar. This is obviously something that people need to know. Do you believe in God? I'm agnostic. I am not an evangelical atheist, but I see no evidence for God. Five books of interviews are expensive to produce. If you enjoyed this interview, please support us by donating a small amount. 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