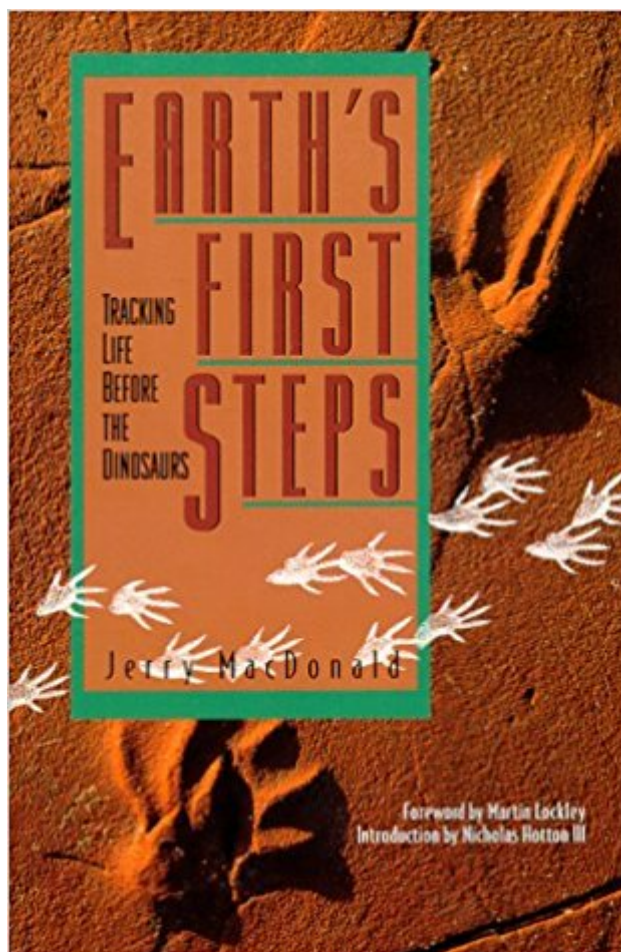


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Earth's First Steps: Tracking Life Before The Dinosaurs



Synopsis

Science. Earth's First Steps is the story of one man's determined search to unlock the mysteries of animals that roamed the earth 280 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs.

Book Information

Hardcover: 290 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

Science. Earth's First Steps is the story of one man's determined search to unlock the mysteries of animals that roamed the earth 280 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs.

I have enormous respect for the amount of effort author Jerry Macdonald put into bringing these footprints to the attention of the world. This book shows just how hard it can be to fight entrenched thought; sometimes it is easier to shift stones than human minds! As has already been said, this book is an autobiographical account of Jerry Macdonald's efforts to reveal and understand the tracks left on a Permian beach, 280 million years ago, in what now the Robledo Mountains of the state of New Mexico. I did find a few errors in this book, for instance, centipedes are identified as 'insects.' I also disagree with the author's idea that a coastal environment isn't a stressful place for a plant; I think Jerry Macdonald failed to take into consideration the high salt content of coastal soils, and neglected the infamous words of the Ancient Mariner on what the ocean is like, 'Water, water every where nor any drop to drink.' Or rather, he seemed to be under the impression that salt is only a danger to amphibians; he does wonder how they survived. I find this book to be very inspiring, both academically and psychologically. I recommend it to anyone who likes to take nature walks, whether

on the beach or in the mountains, as well as the usual suggestion that those interested in prehistoric life read it.

Very good addition to my geology library.

First of all, I live about 15 miles from the site. Second, I was very impressed that the tracks were made by animals pre-dating the "age of dinosaurs" by 40 to 60 million years! Pretty cool for something in my back yard. Not overly technical.

Growing up in west Texas, I spent decades exploring the desert on long treks armed with a stick, a canteen and the fantasy of finding lost gold mines, indian arrow heads or enigmatic fossils. Never once did I suspect that only a few miles away in the Robledo Hills of Las Cruces lay one of the most magnificent undiscovered fossil sites on earth -- over forty layers of pristine Permian-era mudflat deposits containing trackways from over 1000 species -- a living snapshot of Earth's first land animals as they roamed over a wet beach 50 million years before the dawn of dinosaurs.

Amazingly, many of these fossil footprint sites were quarried and built into taco stands, homes and fireplaces in Las Cruces without ever being recognized -- until they crossed the path of one man of amazing determination. Jerry MacDonald was a college dropout who spent 10 years working odd jobs. Unable to ignore his magnetic attraction to science, he was finally finishing a belated BS in geology at New Mexico State University in 1985 when he got his first glimpse of fossil tracks in a local museum. He would eventually spend over 10 years searching out, quarrying and cataloging fossil footprints in what has been called one of the biggest single-handed rock excavations ever made. But that task would be easy compared to the struggle of convincing skeptics the trackways were real, and finally gaining government protection for this precious porthole into the past. By the time he was finished, MacDonald would be credited with discovering and preserving the finest array of Permian era trackways on Earth. MacDonald tells his life's story from a unique sociological perspective, explaining the progression from "pre-discovery" to the final step of popularization. When I finished this book, there was no question in my mind that, except for MacDonald's herculean efforts, the world's finest and oldest footprints would still be crumbling undiscovered in the desert hills near Las Cruces. If this book whets your appetite for tracking extinct creatures, take a look at a comprehensive classic about some comparatively recent fossil footprints -- "Tracking Dinosaurs" by Martin Lockley.-Auralgo

My nephew is enjoying this read.

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