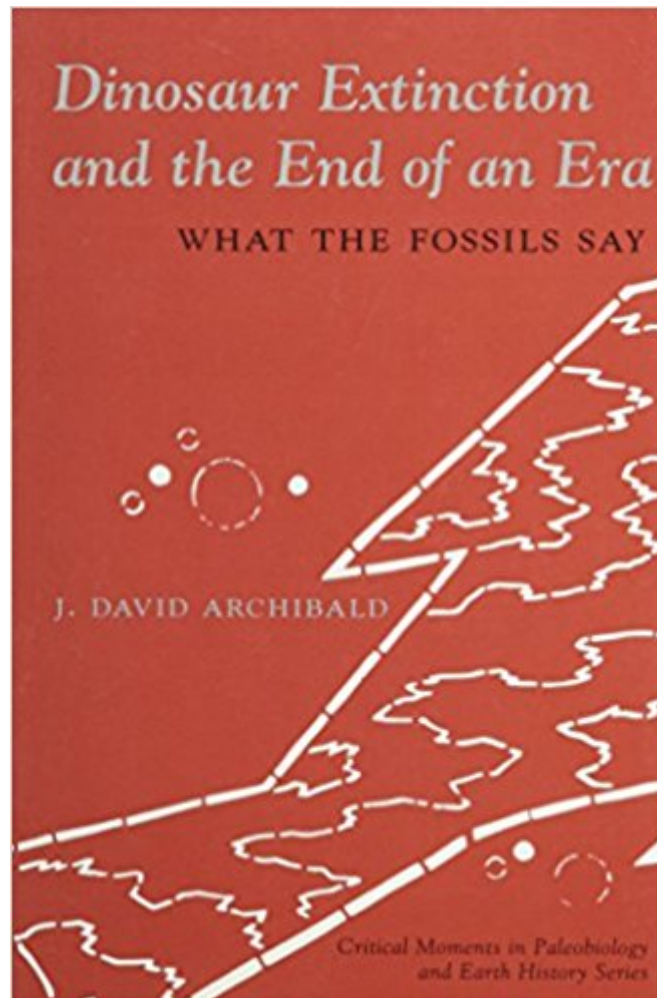




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Dinosaur Extinction And The End Of An Era



Synopsis

The first book to approach the Cretaceous extinction -- the period during which dinosaurs disappeared from Earth -- from the perspective of the fossil record.

Book Information

Series: The Critical Moments and Perspectives in Earth History and Paleobiology

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Customer Reviews

Archibald presents a superb synopsis of vertebrate fossil assemblages found in the western interior of the U.S. leading up to the extinction . . . [He] claims that sea-level change is the principal cause of dinosaur extinction, but he does not deny that meteoritic impact also played a role . . . The student is exposed to the details behind the theories, and the reasoning that drives serious scientific debate. The well-informed geologist will see a side of the extinction debate that has not been promoted in the press and nonspecialist literature.

The first book to approach the Cretaceous extinction -- the period during which dinosaurs disappeared from Earth -- from the perspective of the fossil record.

Mammal paleontology is too fast-moving a field. A 1996 book is not sufficiently up to date. Start with Archibald's 2013 book.

The best book on the market concerning the fossil record at the Cretaceous/Tertiary (K/T)

Boundary! In this excellently written book, Archibald clearly points out the misconceptions, myths and truths concerning the K/T extinction, and though the book is technical in nature, it is the technical aspects of the fossil record that are typically overlooked by other books and articles promoting the asteroid that "killed the dinosaurs." The fossil record needs to be looked at - critically. And Archibald excels in that. Moreover, he approaches the subject with an open mind. If conclusions can't be made from the evidence, he doesn't make them. That cannot be said of others who support the impact theory without considering what the fossil record actually "says" about the extinction. If one seriously considers Archibald's arguments, one has no choice but to question the validity of the impact as a "selective" killer at the end of the Cretaceous. This book is a must read for those who think the riddle has been solved. It hasn't.

Archibald raises some points of interest re the K/T event ... even an achillea heel or two. Perhaps the single bolide strike is a tad overdone. The author adds elements more in line with ecological assessments re an extinction event: major changes in the earth's situation 65mya. He notes an apparent diminution of species in the stratigraphic ledger. He notes changes in the seas (regression), extraordinary Trapps activities and an impact. He appropriately queries the reality of a 60 mile bolide solely producing the lethality; event characterised in the extinction of dinosaurs, excepting birds. Of further concern is the mid-90s date of his book. Have any of his perspectives been scrutinized? Where does his thesis sit in today's paleontological arena? Was it a single collision, or multiplicity of elements? Where does Archibald say now?!

I think that this book is important to any discussion of dinosaur extinction and the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary, because of the breadth of fossil information the author uses to evaluate the possible causes of the extinctions that mark this era. An important feature is the discussion of the limits of the data available from the fossil record. While I enjoyed reading this book, I did not find it a particularly easy read. This is probably due to the author trying to present a complex picture while maintaining scientific rigour and without injecting unstated opinion. Robert Bakker or Steven Jay Gould may be easier to read, but they are trying to sell a particular view in each of their writings. Dr. Archibald states his opinions clearly, but bends over backwards to fairly present alternative theories. I give it high ratings for content, but the dry, technical style may put off some readers.

If enthusiasm is any measure this book should be a great success. Archibald brings a sense of

immediacy to the subject of dinosaur extinction that transcends the academic nature of much of the material he presents. Anyone interested in the extinctions at the end of the Cretaceous will find a wealth of material regarding the fossil evidence here. The book serves as a counterbalance to the popular vision of the dinosaurs vanishing in a meteorite-induced cataclysm, and gives us an entirely different view of the lethal events that these giants might have faced. Unfortunately, the book also has some serious flaws. Despite his zeal for the subject, Archibald is not a good storyteller, and his attention meanders erratically, making for a difficult read. More serious for this reader was a persistent impression that in trying to slay the dragons of meteorite-impact extinction theories Archibald has lost objectivity and bends interpretations to support his ideas even if the evidence is tenuous. He has an irritating habit of building up an argument (usually against some line supporting extinction caused by meteorite impact) and then adding a few lines describing serious contrary evidence at the end, and admitting that maybe his original argument was not correct. The information he offers seems to suggest that extinction of the dinosaurs was gradual, but there are enough examples of bias and typical persuasive sales techniques in the book to prevent me from trusting the author. He is too much a partisan, and it shows in the exaggerated statements that are found throughout the book. His assessment that meteorite impact effects would be equally devastating for all terrestrial forms of life is far too simplistic for serious consideration, and his assertion that the mobile dinosaurs would suffer preferentially from habitat segmentation is unconvincing. I would recommend this book for the information and the ideas it presents and as a good survey of current thought among paleontologists concerning Cretaceous extinctions.

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