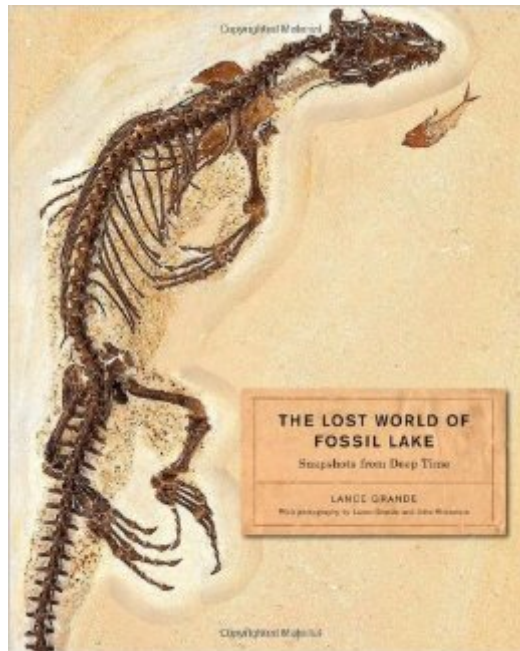


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# The Lost World Of Fossil Lake: Snapshots From Deep Time



## Synopsis

The landscape of southwestern Wyoming around the ghost town of Fossil is beautiful but harsh; a dry, high mountain desert with cool nights and long, cold winters inhabited by a sparse mountain desert community. But during the early Eocene, more than fifty million years ago, it was a subtropical lake, surrounded by volcanoes and forests and teeming with life. Buried within the sun-baked limestone is spectacular evidence of the lush vegetation and plentiful fauna of the ancient past, a transitional ecosystem giving us clues to how North America recovered from a great extinction event that wiped out dinosaurs and the majority of all species on the planet. Paleontologists have been conducting excavations at Fossil Butte for more than 150 years, and with *The Lost World of Fossil Lake*, one of the world's leading experts on the fossils from this spectacular locality takes readers on a fascinating journey through the history of the discovery and exploration of the site. Deftly mixing incredible color photographs of the remarkable fossils uncovered at the site with an explanation of their evolutionary significance, Grande presents an unprecedented, comprehensive portrait of the site, its treasures, and what we've learned from them. Grande presents a broad range of fossilized organisms from Fossil Lake "from single-celled algae to palm trees to crocodiles" and together they make this long-extinct community come to life in all its diversity and splendor. A field guide and atlas round out the book, enabling readers to identify and classify the majority of the known fossils from the site. Lavishly produced in full color, *The Lost World of Fossil Lake* is a stunning reminder of the intellectual and physical beauty of scientific investigation and a breathtaking window onto our planet's long-lost past.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have been waiting for the existence of this book ever since I first saw a picture of the prehistoric bat, *Icaronycteris index*, in 1997 when reading about prehistoric mammals. The deposits of Fossil Lake reveal schools of fish, as well as mysterious birds, still poorly understood insects, assorted reptiles, and bizarre mammals. This book is full of beautiful fossils and the text serves as a springboard for further research on the extraordinary material. I must issue a minor warning to defend this fine book: If you are looking for a book about dinosaurs, do not buy this book. The exquisite reptile on the cover is a *Saniwa ensidens*, an extinct relative of the Komodo Dragon. They say a picture worth a thousand words; with this book, I believe it.

A fossil hunting partner of mine emailed me about this book, telling me that it helped reaffirm why we spend countless hours in remote locations breaking rocks in the relentless wind and sun of the American west. I had previously purchased Lance Grande's more modest work "Paleontology of the Green River Formation with a Review of the Fish Fauna" (Geological Survey of Wyoming/Bulletin 63 1984) and knew of the authors familiarity and expertise with this fascinating subject... Grande is considered the foremost authority on this amazing fossil site. Certainly, this book confirms his authority and is the definitive work on the vast, highly productive Fossil Lake/Green River formation. *The Lost World of Fossil Lake: Snapshots from Deep Time*, takes the publishing of what is an essentially scientific work to an entirely new level. It is a gorgeous publication for anyone interested in natural history, fossils, biological evolution and the joy of discovery. The photography, typography, layout and printing are first rate... the book is beautiful - and worthy of any coffee table presentation. More importantly, the depth and perceptive nature of the text compels readers to contemplate the meaning and implications of each and every paragraph. This is as good a "read" as you'll find in a book about fossil discoveries - and (hip hip hurrah!) there's not a dinosaur bone to be found on any page. Paleontology, despite what one might think from the sheer volume of popular publications, is not all about old T-Rex. Lance Grande shows us how this immense fossil formation, certainly one of the most prolific "dig sites" in the world presents us with a snapshot of the early Eocene period, long after the extinction of dinosaurs. It was a time when the north American continent was once again connected from coast to coast (a vast inland sea was gone) and the climate was subtropical - much warmer and far wetter than today. Readers will discover what this region looked like 55 million years ago, how the fossil lake system was formed, what flora/fauna thrived and died within its waters and how they were preserved for mankind to discover and interpret. My guess is that other readers will be equally as impressed, amazed and delighted by this

book. Highly recommended!

I have known of Fossil Buttes for 50 years. This book tells the story of The Lost World of Fossil Lake. The little gift shop did not do justice to seeing what has been 'unearthed' from this site. A visit in the summer to the actual quarry sites is too hot and too dusty for my wife and too difficult for my old knees. The author has turned a scientific book into a work of art and readability that is so enjoyable that I have read passages aloud to friends at dinner. It is a fascinating book and when you consider the cost of travel today, this is the best way in the world to visit and explore Fossil Butte Monument. Many Thanks to the author for make ancient rock specimens "come alive" in this book. The book stays out so we can look at it again and again and share it with friends.

Standing at the base of an otherwise nondescript mesa, watching the sagebrush and sand bend and blow by in the constant wind, I have difficulty imagining this barren landscape as the bottom of a lake that is surrounded by lush vegetation and the occasionally eruptive volcano. In fact, to get that view you need to push your mind back some 52 million years or so. This is not the only lake; there are two others and both are larger. But this one, Fossil Lake by its modern name, will be the source of some of the best preserved, unusual and most prolific fossils in the world. We've all seen the fish from the lake; they show up at conventions, in stores from the highest end fossil shops to the Salvation Army's. A picture of pleasant dark brown bones and scales on a background of light cream rock, the most common remind you of sardines in both size and shape. Located just west of the small mining and ranching town of Kemmerer in Wyoming, there is a lot more in these fossil beds than small fish, in fact there is a whole lot more than fish, period. The great quantity, diversity of the fossils, their showy preservation, the ease of preparation, (early workers used nails, I use sharpened files and sewing needles), attracted some of the greats of nineteenth century American paleontology. First was the grandfather of it all, Joseph Leidy. He was soon followed by E. D. Cope and O. E. Marsh who gleefully extended their personal feud and dirty tricks to the denizens of Fossil Lake. Later a few workers paid sporadic attention to specific fossils but there had been no comprehensive treatment of the lake's entire fossil richness until now. Each quarry in use today is at a different place in the old lake, some in deeper water, and some in more shallow waters. And then there are at least three separate groups of layers, each with its own characteristic. This has led to a truly amazing undertaking. At almost 425 pages including appendices, glossary and index, and generously illustrated with 222 color plates, some with multiple images, the book is obviously significant to even to the most complete novice. To those interested in the area's fossil, it is a

comprehensive and easily applied reference. Even professional diggers have different ideas of what to which species a given fossil belongs. This is easy to understand since some of the interspecies differences are quite subtle. But Grande uses photographs and text so well that one should have no trouble deciding which species you have in your hand. While most visitors focus on the fish, Grande treats almost every other conceivable fossil type in addition. Plants, insects, other arthropods, extinct primates, worms, snakes and even birds get his excellent attention. He even points out how little micropaleontology has been done on the bacteria of the lake thereby giving aspiring PhD students a rich source of thesis topics on a golden platter. Lastly, the writing is a mix of technical terms and regular English. But Grande explains or paraphrases the technical terms so that, combined with pictures, anyone with even a smattering of scientific training will understand the bulk of the text.

This is the definitive book on the Green River Formation fossils!!! It is very well written and produced on very high grade paper with outstanding photography of the fossils. If you are interested in the fossils of this region then this is the book to have. Well worth the cost!

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