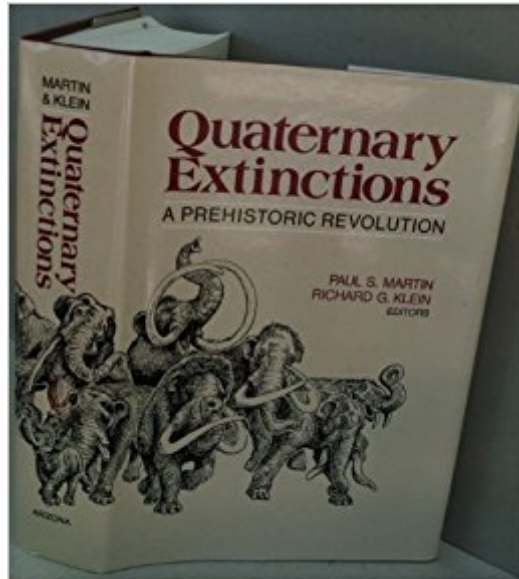


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Quaternary Extinctions: A Prehistoric Revolution



Synopsis

"What caused the extinction of so many animals at or near the end of the Pleistocene? Was it overkill by human hunters, the result of a major climatic change or was it just a part of some massive evolutionary turnover? Questions such as these have plagued scientists for over one hundred years and are still being heatedly debated today. Quaternary Extinctions presents the latest and most comprehensive examination of these questions." —Geological Magazine "May be regarded as a kind of standard encyclopedia for Pleistocene vertebrate paleontology for years to come." —American Scientist "Should be read by paleobiologists, biologists, wildlife managers, ecologists, archeologists, and anyone concerned about the ongoing extinction of plants and animals." —Science "Uncommonly readable and varied for watchers of paleontology and the rise of humankind." —Scientific American "Represents a quantum leap in our knowledge of Pleistocene and Holocene palaeobiology. . . . Many volumes on our bookshelves are destined to gather dust rather than attention. But not this one." —Nature "Two strong impressions prevail when first looking into this epic compendium. One is the judicious balance of views that range over the whole continuum between monocausal, cultural, or environmental explanations. The second is that both the data base and theoretical sophistication of the protagonists in the debate have improved by a quantum leap since 1967." —American Anthropologist

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is not for the novice. However, it is an excellently organized and drafted presentation of 40 papers on the variously submitted causes for the extinction of many dominant and marvelous

animals, from the end of the Ice Age to our own time. Since no formal records were kept on this decline, even though many vanishings occurred during the time of record-keeping people, the scientist is left to investigate and to hypothesize on the cause or causes of the extinctions. Recorded here are many of those investigations and their results. The diversity of opinion is an exciting testament, not only to the ingenuity of the investigators, but to the processes of science itself. Some investigations are restricted, both in terms of time, area, and species. Others are far broader, even global in scale. It would appear from a perusal of the articles that climate and consequent botanical change, or the coming of man into a successful hunter, were the primary cause(s) of the tragedy. But, as some contributors note, other causes may be relevant as well. Among the notorious RECENT extinctions discussed are the mammoth, less than 3,500 years ago, the Irish elk, in 500 A.D., or so, the moa of New Zealand, the Aepyornis, or elephant bird, and the giant lemur, both of Madagascar, within possibly the last 200 years. It seems germane that the islands, where man arrived only in the past 200 to 500 years, had the last megafauna to disappear, but, of course, the process goes on even in our own time, as witness the mountain gorilla, black rhinoceros, Javanese Tiger, Tasmanian Tiger, passenger pigeon, etc. As noted at the outset, some background in Ice Age paleontology is probably necessary for a full enjoyment of this book.

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