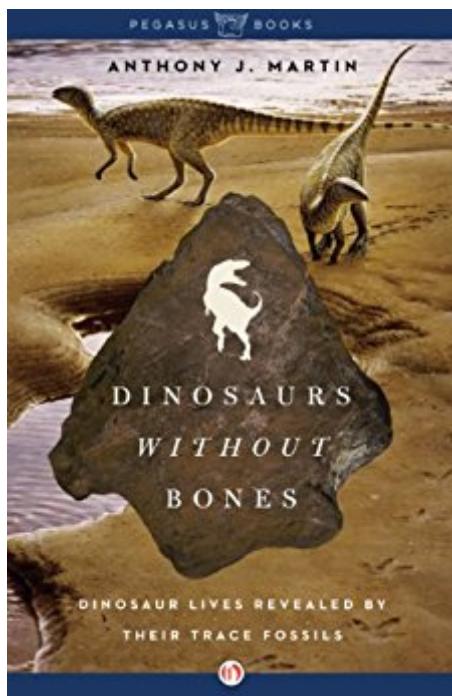


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Dinosaurs Without Bones: Dinosaur Lives Revealed By Their Trace Fossils



Synopsis

âœ[Bubbling] over with the joy of scientific discovery.â .â . Great fun for anyone looking to revive their childhood dinosaur obsessions.â •â "Publishers Weekly, starred review What if we woke up one morning all of the dinosaur bones in the world were gone? How would we know these iconic animals had a 165-million year history on earth, and had adapted to all land-based environments from pole to pole? What clues would be left to discern not only their presence, but also to learn about their sex lives, raising of young, social lives, combat, and who ate who? What would it take for us to know how fast dinosaurs moved, whether they lived underground, climbed trees, or went for a swim? Welcome to the world of ichnology, the study of traces and trace fossilsâ "such as tracks, trails, burrows, nests, toothmarks, and other vestiges of behaviorâ "and how through these remarkable clues, we can explore and intuit the rich and complicated lives of dinosaurs. With a unique, detective-like approach, interpreting the forensic clues of these long-extinct animals that leave a much richer legacy than bones, Martin brings the wild world of the Mesozoic to life for the twenty-first-century reader.

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Customer Reviews

It's sometimes difficult to tell whether *Dinosaurs Without Bones* is about dinosaurs or about paleontologists. Both turn out to be fascinating, and one of them can still be seen in the field today (Jurassic Park notwithstanding). The stated theme of the book is dinosaurs beyond mere bones. That is, every shred of evidence, from footprints to bathtub-like constructs that indicate where a dinosaur *took a leak* • all add to our collective knowledge of how flesh and blood dinosaurs lived. But from that (scant) knowledge, flights of fantasy emerge. Paleontologists aren't mere scientists; they are fantasists, dreaming up scenarios if not whole novels about what their stony discoveries mean. To be sure, they have their lists of reality checks, if only to weather potential criticisms better, but their imaginations are where they really show off. And *Dinosaurs Without Bones* flies freely, leveraging every bodily function that fossil traces afford us. Every bodily function. Paleontologists need to be expert in an incredible range of fields. They need to understand everything from digestion to physics. They need to know that a T-rex could not possibly run around at 45 mph as in the movies, because if it ever slipped or tripped, its massive weight and height would most surely have killed it in its fall, which is not a very effective evolutionary trait or strategy. The book is filled with such observations. It makes for a potentially realistic vision of what actually took place on planet earth 200 mya (million years ago, a lovely abbreviation used throughout). There is a great deal of data on birds - modern birds *which for Martin represent the living embodiment of dinosaurs*. His appreciation of them dominates the last quarter of the book.

Ichnology is the study of trace fossils (footprints, tooth marks, burrows, etc.) The most interesting thing about trace fossils is that they record the behavior of a living animal, as opposed to body fossils which tell you everything about anatomy, but are effectively mute about behavior. Also, trace fossils can be very abundant; an animal only has so many bones, but can leave thousands of tracks in a lifetime. As you probably know, there are a number of frustrations connected with linking the two types of fossil: The formations that preserved footprints, for instance, are seldom the same formations that preserve bones. Also, although one can with some confidence assign which broad type of animal made which trace fossil, narrowing it down to a specific genus is sometimes impossible. Therefore one needs to have a separate system of nomenclature, with "ichnospecies" (types of traces) and "real" species, with no absolute way of linking the two. As with any field in paleontology, popular books on ichnology concentrate on dinosaurs. In the 1990's most books about dinosaur trace fossils were by Martin Lockley: "Tracking Dinosaurs" (1991), "Dinosaur Tracks and Traces" (1991), "The Eternal Trail" (1999), etc. After a two decade gap in popular books on ichnology, I was pleased to see a new book "*Dinosaurs Without Bones*" by Anthony J. Martin. Martin

is a paleontologist at Emory University who specializes in trace fossils, with emphasis on the Southern Hemisphere. The chapter headings are:1. Sleuthing Dinosaurs2. These Feet Were Made for Walking, Running, Sitting, Swimming, Herding, and Hunting3. The Mystery of Lark Quarry4. Dinosaur Nests and Bringing Up Babies5. Dinosaurs Down Underground6.

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