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Terrestrial Ecosystems Through Time: Evolutionary Paleoecology Of Terrestrial Plants And Animals



Synopsis

Breathtaking in scope, this is the first survey of the entire ecological history of life on land "from the earliest traces of terrestrial organisms over 400 million years ago to the beginning of human agriculture. By providing myriad insights into the unique ecological information contained in the fossil record, it establishes a new and ambitious basis for the study of evolutionary paleoecology of land ecosystems. A joint undertaking of the Evolution of Terrestrial Ecosystems Consortium at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, and twenty-six additional researchers, this book begins with four chapters that lay out the theoretical background and methodology of the science of evolutionary paleoecology. Included are a comprehensive review of the taphonomy and paleoenvironmental settings of fossil deposits as well as guidelines for developing ecological characterizations of extinct organisms and the communities in which they lived. The remaining three chapters treat the history of terrestrial ecosystems through geological time, emphasizing how ecological interactions have changed, the rate and tempo of ecosystem change, the role of exogenous "forcing factors" in generating ecological change, and the effect of ecological factors on the evolution of biological diversity. The six principal authors of this volume are all associated with the Evolution of Terrestrial Ecosystems program at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

Book Information

Paperback: 588 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; 1 edition (August 15, 1992)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226041557

ISBN-13: 978-0226041551

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

Classic textbook edited by a Who's Who in terrestrial paleontology from the last 25-30 years. The chapters are in-depth, but the writing is not incomprehensible for the casual reader. Two thumbs up!

You may want to brush up on your palaeobotany before reading this book. I loved it! It was just what I had been looking for!

The slow and verbose plodding along of this book confirms that it was written by a gaggle of "collaborators", each one with a thesaurus in hand. The subject matter, which by itself is fascinating, was completely obfuscated by the writing. The illustrations are beautiful, few and far in between and completely non sequitur. Bibliography is excellent.

"Ecosystems" is 500+ pages, and could easily be expanded to ten times that. This is the first book I found to discuss all major life-bearing periods from an ecological standpoint. Minor nits: I wish at least a couple of periods had been treated in depth. The writing could be a bit crisper. And as a layman, I would have appreciated a glossary for some of the words that don't show up in my Webster's Unabridged.

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