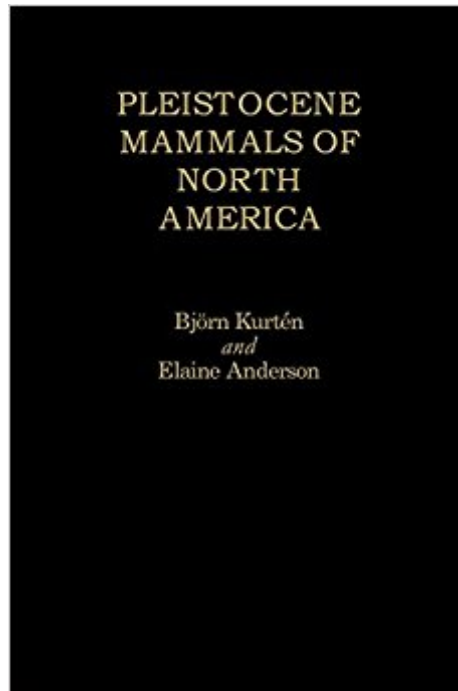




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Pleistocene Mammals Of North America



Synopsis

Format Hardcover Subject Paleontology General Miscellaneous Fossils Paleontology Geological
Time Periods Publisher New York Columbia University Press 1980

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Book as statedSon is thrilled with it.

If you are serious at all on the mammals of Pleistocene North America, whether extinct or still with us, then you have to purchase this book. A great resource, it exhaustively and authoritatively chronicles all known mammals preserved as fossils from that period of earth's history. In addition to the well known megafauna such as mammoths, mastodons, dire wolves, ground sloths, and giant bison, Kurten and Anderson detail animals nearly always ignored in popular works, such as rodents, bats, and insectivores. The book begins with a thorough listing of all known sites of Blancan, Irvingtonian, and Rancholabrean faunas throughout the United States and Canada, with each site sorted by state or province, its location noted on a map (and in detail in the text), and notes included on general nature of the site, species recovered there, and often notes on its general importance. Nice black and white illustrations of some of the faunas are interspersed in this section of the tome. The bulk of the book though is the exhaustive listing of fossil mammals, each chapter

organized around a particular order, and the chapter subdivided by family. Each species has common, alternate common, genus, species, and alternate (and no longer valid) genus and species names (such as in the case with the Jefferson's Mammoth, *Mammuthus jeffersoni*; it has also been called the Columbian Mammoth and the Imperial Mammoth, and seven other scientific names have been ascribed to it). Entries vary in the detail to which the species is described, though many are given several paragraphs devoted to description, life habits, and speculation as to the reason for extinction. Black and white illustrations of fossils are included in each chapter, and a small number of extinct mammals are shown as how they appeared in life. Occasional maps illustrate sites of major finds. Though not really a book one can sit down in a nice chair and read, it is interesting to flip through. Though more of a scholarly resource, it gives one pause to consider just how many mammals are no longer present on this continent. North America not only had the infamous "sabretooth," the dire wolf, the mastodon, mammoths, tank-like glyptodonts, and the exotic ground sloth, but it once had scores of camels and llamas, a bewildering variety of horses, as well as giant beavers, yaks, cheetah, giant marmots, and possibly even pandas.

As one fascinated by the Ice Age, especially vanished megafauna, I looked for a long time for a comprehensive book on vanished Ice Age animals of North America. This is it. The treatise is exhaustive in terms of what was known up to the publishing date. If it is read carefully, it will impart a knowledge of these interesting animals and also give the reader an excellent background on the Pleistocene ice advances. The authors' discussion regarding the breakdown of time periods is excellent. Even though the passage of time and new findings, particularly in Florida, have lessened the value of some of the data presented, the book remains a peerless review of a dynamic part of Earth's history. Caveat: The reader should have some background in zoology and anatomy, otherwise constant recourse to a dictionary may be required.

This book has the most information that a paleontologist can find about North American mammals in one place. It is an exhaustive text book chock full of facts about all the mammals from that continent that have lived in the last 3 million years. As a layman interested in paleontology I found the book fascinating and easy to read. The book is separated into two main parts: first chronology of faunas, and then than a discussion of all the orders of mammals, species by species. The book also discusses possible reasons for extinction. The only flaw in the book are some of the reasons given for extinction are contradictory. For example the extinction for the giant beaver was supposedly caused by competition with the modern day beaver, yet they coexisted for 2 million years, and the

dental patterns suggest that they didn't have the same habits. Modern day beavers probably even created habitat that was favourable to prehistoric giant beavers.

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