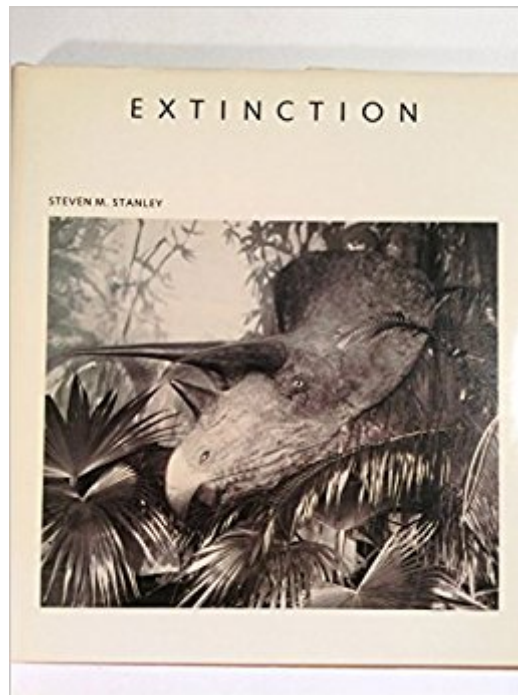




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Extinction (Scientific American Library)



Synopsis

Nice book to add to any collection.

Book Information

Series: Scientific American Library (Book 20)

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Customer Reviews

Nice book to add to any collection.

Well written and surprisingly current considering when it was written. I would recommend it highly.

I was introduced to Extinction several years back. I got a board game version (about survival on an individual scale) of it for my brother's kids. They enjoyed it so much that when they grew up I got them the card game, too. This one is more competitive and involves how the dinosaurs died off. Makes you think...

I just learned and played this card game at a weekend gaming convention yesterday. I liked it so much that here I am buying it the next day. It's quick to learn, quick to play, and appeals to a wide age range.

"Extinction" was published in 1987, after the discovery of the iridium layer at the K-T (Cretaceous-Tertiary) Boundary but before the Chicxulub impact crater (first reported and ignored at the 1981 annual meeting of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists) impressed itself upon the

hearts and minds of paleontologists and geologists. Professor Stanley, who is a paleobiologist at Johns Hopkins University, presents an authoritative account of all of the mysterious cataclysms that have swept our planet, without resorting to an extraterrestrial 'deus ex machina.' He does discuss the meaning of iridium concentrations at extinction boundaries, but the main thrust of his book is a "comprehensive evaluation of the record of great extinctions that is being read from rocks and fossils.... More generally, in the process of elucidating the crises that we term mass extinctions, this book takes the reader on a trip through the history of life on earth." If you are fond of journeys through what John McPhee calls 'Deep Time,' this book makes an excellent and only slightly-outdated guide. The illustrations are stunning, even in this age of three-dimensional, in-your-face velociraptors. It is one of my favorite volumes from the Scientific American Library, along with "Viruses," "The Living Cell (two volumes)," "Powers of Ten," and "Islands." (Dear W.H. Freeman & Company: I wish you had continued this excellent series of books.) There have been fewer than a dozen mass extinctions since multicellular life first appeared on Earth. Professor Stanley covers all of them, beginning with the first great extinction of the acritarchs, and ending with the demise of the mammoths, giant wombats, and Shasta ground sloths that we ourselves may have doomed. His emphasis is on climatic change, although he doesn't consider that to have been the only factor in mass extinction---only the most important one. Read Professor Stanley's well-presented evidence, and do not ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for the trilobites and the lacy bryozoans of the Paleozoic, armored Dunkleosteus of the Devonian, the dinosaurs of the Mesozoic, and the great, sabre-toothed Creodonta of the Cenozoic---not to mention Smilodon fatalis of a more recent era.

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