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Review of Fortey, Richard: Fossils: The Key to the Past

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Fortey, Richard. *Fossils : The Key to the Past*. 5th edition. 2015.

Now in its fifth edition, this comprehensive introduction to paleontology includes recent discoveries about human evolution and the development of micropaleontology. Fortey (Natural History Museum, London; "Earth : an Intimate History") clarifies the relationships between geology, paleontology, biology and chemistry. Geological eras, rock types, plant and animal fossils, extinction and evolution are among the topics discussed and illustrated with charts and colored photographs. Particularly fascinating are speculations on dinosaur extinction and on the precursors to and evolution of *Homo sapiens*. The movement of continents, the effects of plate tectonics on terrestrial and marine organisms and their migrations, the fluctuations of oceans and climates and the building of coral reefs are explained. Fossil fuels, such as coal and oil are "fossil sunshine" and will eventually run out. Prospecting companies now employ micropaleontologists to correlate the presence of specific guide fossils which indicate past sedimentary conditions. Readers interested in fossil collecting are advised where to find fossils, and how to handle, clean, identify and store them. VERDICT : Suitable for college students and educated readers, this work is less technical than "Evolution of Fossil Ecosystems" by Paul Selden, 2004 or "The Rise of Animals..." by Mikhail A. Fedonkin and others, 2007. Lists of books and websites, a glossary and an index are provided. The reader is left with an understanding of the immensity of geological time and the volume of fossil-bearing rock throughout the world.