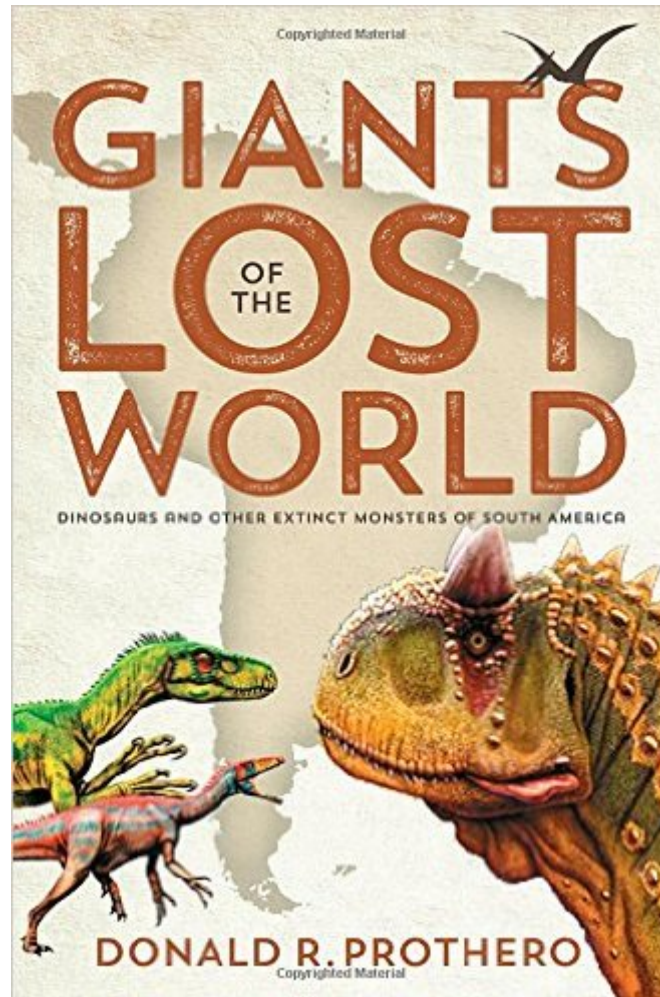


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Giants Of The Lost World: Dinosaurs And Other Extinct Monsters Of South America



Synopsis

More than a hundred years ago, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote a novel called *The Lost World* with the exciting premise that dinosaurs and other prehistoric beasts still ruled in South America. Little did Conan Doyle know, there were terrifying monsters in South America--they just happened to be extinct. In fact, South America has an incredible history as a land where many strange creatures evolved and died out. In his book *Giants of the Lost World: Dinosaurs and Other Extinct Monsters of South America*, Donald R. Prothero uncovers the real science and history behind this fascinating story. The largest animal ever discovered was the huge sauropod dinosaur *Argentinosaurus*, which was about 130 feet long and weighed up to 100 tons. The carnivorous predator *Giganotosaurus* weighed in at more than 8 tons and measured more than 47 feet long, dwarfing the *T. rex* in comparison. Gigantic anacondas broke reptile records; possums evolved into huge saber-toothed predators; and ground sloths grew larger than elephants in this strange, unknown land. Prothero presents the scientific details about each of these prehistoric beasts, provides a picture of the ancient landscapes they once roamed, and includes the stories of the individuals who first discovered their fossils for a captivating account of a lost world that is stranger than fiction.

Book Information

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: Smithsonian Books (October 4, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1588345734

ISBN-13: 978-1588345738

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.8 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (15 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #771,811 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #105 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Dinosaurs](#) #149 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Fossils](#) #1703 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Archaeology](#)

Customer Reviews

There is an element of the subjective to any book review and I'll be the first to agree that my rating of five stars is a reflection of how impressed I was with this book. I am hard pressed to name another book which both entertained and informed as much as this one did. Let me give you just a

tiny sample of entertaining information I gleaned from this book. I learned that protomammals vastly pre-existed dinosaurs. Previously I thought that mammals came to being at the late dinosaur age and only dominated after the competing dinosaurs mysteriously vanished. I was not only wrong, but laughably so. Linked to that, what caused the demise of those dinosaurs? I thought I had that one nailed too but I was again laughably wrong. Finally, and this is hardly the end of the information in the book, I thought the solution to the American megafauna extinction was obvious. It isn't and my reason for it doesn't hold up under careful examination. The book does focus on the astounding, and to many the unknown, fauna of South America. At one point, South America became separated from the other land masses that once made up a single land mass. This caused it to develop through millions of years of evolution, unique and often gigantic animals. The separation wasn't complete due to what I can only describe as seafaring Africans but for the most part, the isolation was complete. The early part of the book does not focus exclusively on South American fauna. The latter part does, but the first sections deal with an Earth wide of paleontology and its attendant sciences especially geology. Clearly, without geologists' input, paleontologists would be left having to guess as to how certain observable events of the past occurred. The book also gives a great overview on how science did and should always work. It is a self-correcting discipline when done properly rather than a defensive method which is what it is when done poorly. If the topics of evolution, ancient fauna, geology and/or paleontology interest you at all, I can easily and eagerly recommend this book. It's worth not only a read, but a re-read and a place on your shelf.

The idea of the Lost World has long fascinated lovers of fiction and science fiction. What better place than South America with its beautiful rainforests and tepui? The largest dinosaurs? Sloths as big as elephants? Be still my heart. I love the idea behind the lost worlds. However, the discussion of the animals veered wildly between encyclopedic descriptions of what has been discovered and modern interpretations, including Disney. I found it distracting and disorganized. It was also tedious. The photographs are really disappointing. They are grainy, dark, and blurry. The reproductions are not very good. The formal properties of the photographs are not well made. Some of the photographs are low contrast with badly managed depth of field. The choices made in printing these pictures have compromised them irretrievably. Paper quality from an advanced reader's copy is not all that is going on here. If you start with a dark photograph of snapshot quality, you are going to end up with a dark photograph of snapshot quality.

This is a relatively short book filled with lots of facts which I didn't know. I never thought of South America as the place for lost giants, but Donald Prothero's narrative is well presented and each chapter well organized. This makes for a very informative book for the passionate paleontologist. Prothero first introduces the reader to the South American continent and how it formed off of Antarctica and Australia. He describes the landscapes, from tropical rain forests to high tepuis. Together these form a varied terrain for a large diversity of animals and plants. While the first half of the book is dedicated to dinosaurs and reptiles and how they possibly became extinct (he has three theories on that), he also covers mammals like opossums, elephants, hippos and horses to sloths, tapirs, anteaters, armadillos. The big question is how these mammals crossed the tiny land channel into Central and North America. They really did walk across, but many over Earth's creation have died out over five periods of extinction. Prothero also includes short biographies on several early paleontologists such as Charles Darwin (who collected a lot of then-unknown fossils off the continent's southern shores) and the Ameghino brothers to more recent ones of the present. He ends his book with a reminder that we are now in the Sixth Extinction, caused mostly by man invading former habitats of unique animals and by human industry, many living in the rain forest. There are plenty of photographs and graphs in this book. The quality of them in the Advanced Reader's Copy is not of the best quality, but they should be much better in the final copy.

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