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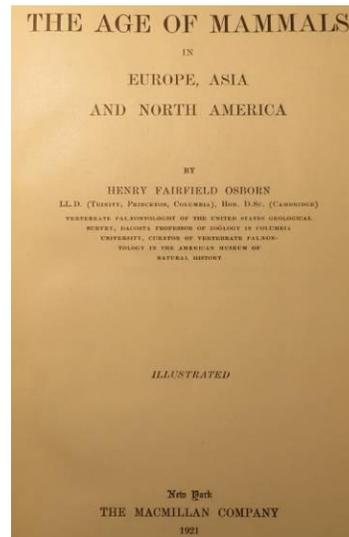
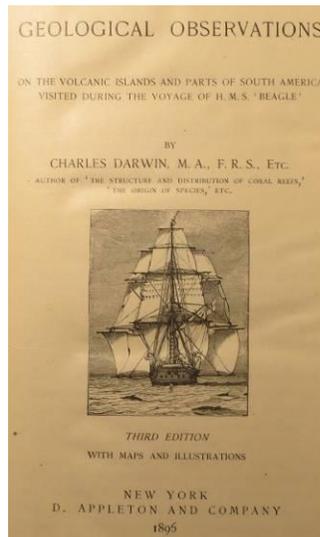
## Collecting Books on Paleontology Michael Hutchins

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested  
Francis Bacon, *Essays*

As an unapologetic bibliophile, I have wanted to write this article for some time. Books are an important gateway to any hobby, including paleontology and geology in general. In books, we can begin to appreciate the incredible variety of fossils and rocks we can collect, their beauty, and their significance to natural history and science. In this article I describe the kinds of books one can collect and their role in understanding and appreciating paleontology.

### Antique Books

Antique books are books that are at least 75-100 years old. Such books are often very rare and can be quite expensive. However, they do offer us an opportunity to delve into the history of paleontology and geology and see how much our knowledge has changed over time. First editions, volumes published for the first time, are typically the most valuable. Many books are reprinted over the years and later editions are less valuable. I do have some of these rare volumes, including editions of Charles Darwin's 1886 volume *Geological Observations: On the Volcanic Islands and Parts of South America Visited During the Voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle* and Henry Fairfield Osborn's 1921 *The Age of Mammals in Europe, Asia and North America*.

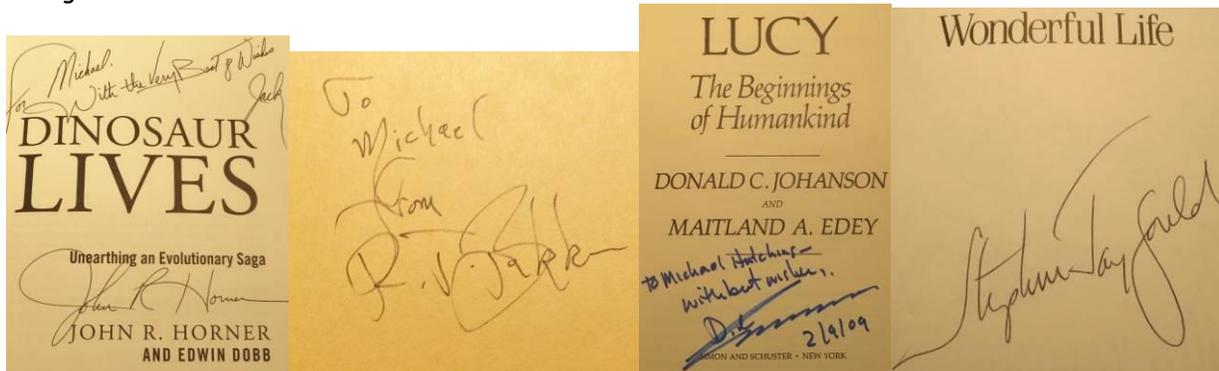


Frontis plates of Darwin's 1886 *Geological Observation* and Osborn's 1921 *The Age of Mammals*.

### Books Signed by the Author

Whenever I have the chance, I love to meet the authors of books, especially important figures in the field of paleontology. When I do, I will also have them sign their books, which greatly increases the volumes' value, both on the bookseller's market and to me personally. Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to meet some of the world's best-known paleontologists and authors, including Jack Horner, Robert Bakker, Donald Johanson, Stephen J. Gould, and Richard Leaky. I have four first-edition books signed by Donald Johanson, the discoverer of "Lucy", one of the world's best-known hominid fossils. I've met him on a couple of occasions, but had an opportunity to work with him while editing the second edition of *Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia*. I met Robert Bakker at a paleontology conference in Casper, Wyoming, had a few beers with him, and asked him to sign

his very popular 1986 book *Hot-blooded Dinosaurs*. Bakker, who is quite the character, was the model for the paleontologist in the movie *Jurassic Park*. While working for the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) from 1990-2005, I had a couple of opportunities to have dinner with Harvard's Stephen Jay Gould before his untimely death in 2002. A fascinating man, Gould was one of the great natural history writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I have a signed copy of his incredible 1989 book *Wonderful Life* on the fauna of the Burgess Shale. I met Jack Horner at a reception at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, MT where he was the Curator of Paleontology. He signed his book *Dinosaur Lives*.

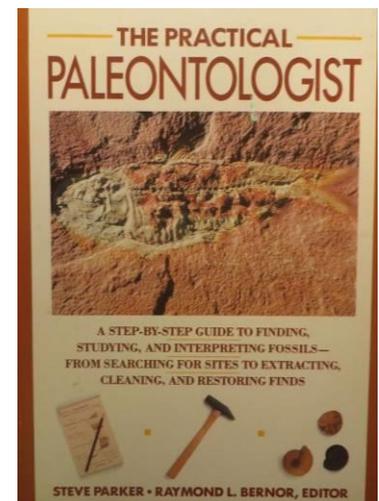


Some examples of signed books by Jack Horner, Robert Bakker, Don Johanson and Stephen J. Gould.

### "How To" Books

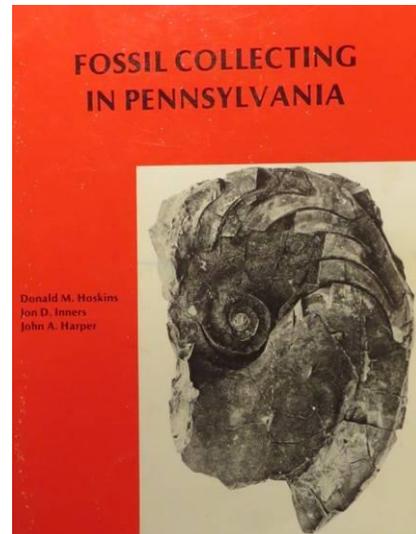
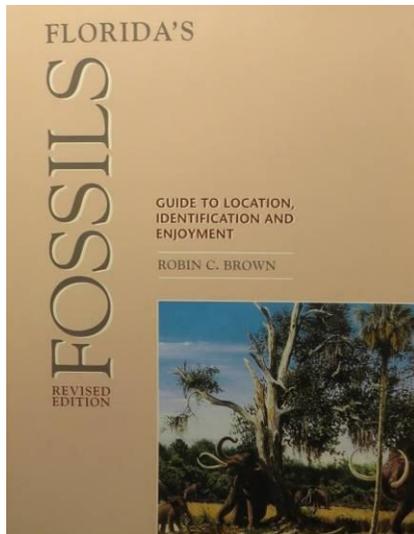
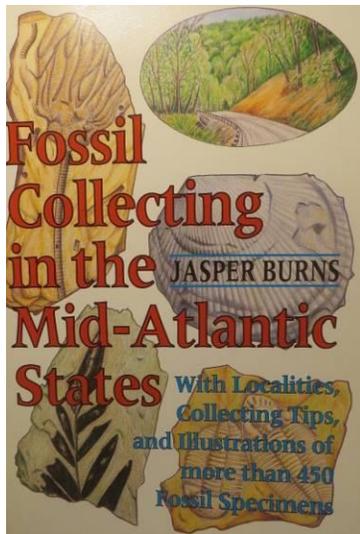
There are a wide variety of what I would call "how to" books about paleontology. These are general books designed to help people learn how to collect, identify and display fossils, which can be very helpful, especially for beginners. A couple I have in my collection include: Steve Parker and Raymond Bernor's 1990 *The Practical Paleontologist: A Step-By Step Guide to Finding, Studying and Interpreting Fossils—From Searching for Sites to Extracting, Cleaning and Restoring Finds* and Gerhard Lichter's 1993 *Fossil Collectors Handbook: Finding, Identifying, Preparing, Displaying*.

Cover of an excellent example of a "how to" book, *The Practical Paleontologist*



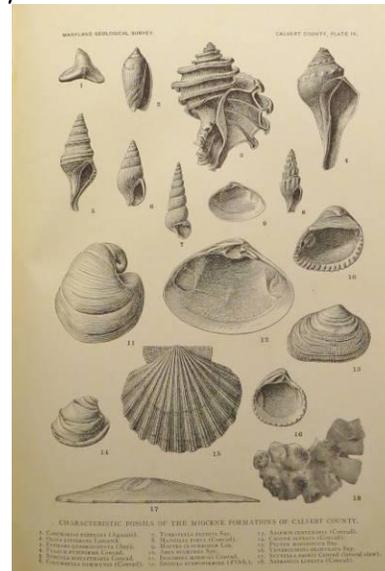
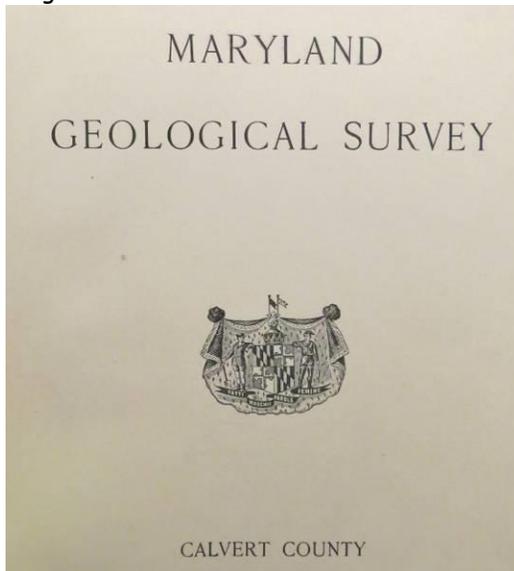
### Locality Guidebooks

Locality guidebooks are among the most valuable of all books to the amateur collector. Not only do they tell us the locations of where we can hunt for fossils, they also tell us what we should be looking for. Knowing what fossils are to be found at a particular location is key to developing "search images", thus increasing one's chances of actually finding specimens in complex environments (See Hutchins, M. 2016. Search images and our quest for fossils. *The Rostrum* 25(1): 5-6). Many guidebooks are available for specific locations around the United States and are a must if you are planning to visit an area that is unfamiliar to you. Often such books will also be extremely valuable in identifying specimens and determining their age after a collecting trip. Many such books are available. Some examples I have in my collection include: Jasper Burns 1991 *Fossil Collecting in the Mid-Atlantic States with Localities, Collecting Tips, and Illustrations of more than 150 Fossil Specimens*, Robin Brown's 1988 *Florida's Fossils: Guide to the Location, Identification and Enjoyment*, and Donald Hoskins, John Inners and John Harper's 1983 *Fossil Collecting In Pennsylvania*.



*Locality guidebooks are key to finding new locations to hunt fossils and identifying them in the field.*

Some of the best examples of these locality guides, although often a bit dated, come from state geological surveys. For example, the Maryland General Assembly established the first geological survey of the state in February, 1834. Maryland was preceded by only four other states in establishing a geological survey, but was the first to fully recognize the importance of creating topographic maps to represent the geology of the State. Several publications have focused on various regions in the state, one of the best known of which is Johns Hopkins University's January, 1907 volume on the geology of the Calvert Cliffs edited by William Bullock Clark, state geologist. I have a copy of this volume in my collection, which includes many plates depicting Miocene fossils from this region. It is still useful to amateur collectors today.

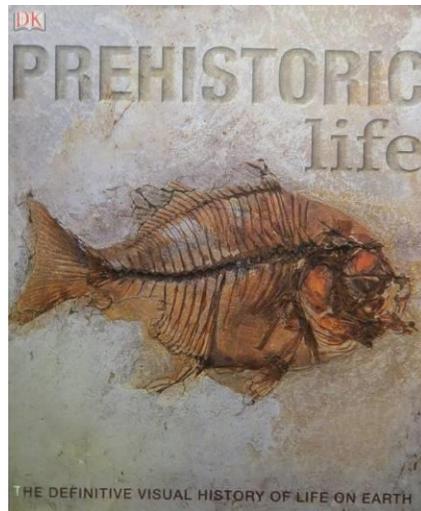


*Frontispiece of the 1907 publication Calvert County of the Maryland Geological Survey (left), along with a plate (right) depicting Miocene fossils from the Calvert Cliffs.*

### Picture Books

Large format picture books depicting fossils are difficult to move around, but can be beautiful additions to your library. I have found them extremely helpful in becoming familiar with a wide range of fossils worldwide. The illustrations are usually of very high quality and feature photographs showing the incredible beauty of these natural objects. Often they also contain beautiful and highly realistic drawings and paintings depicting

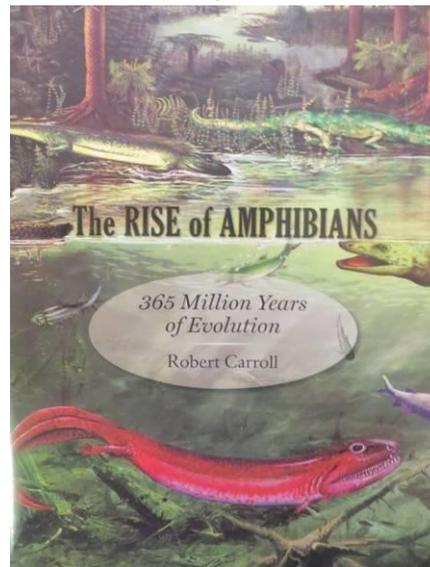
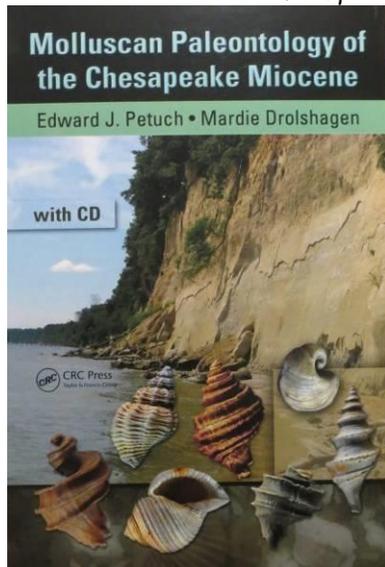
prehistoric life in general. I have many such volumes in my collection. Some of my favorites include: Doring Kinderly's (editor) 2009 *Prehistoric Life: The Definitive Visual History of Life on Earth*, Giovanni Pinna's 1990 *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Fossils* and Niles Eldredge's 1991 *Fossils: The Evolution and Extinction of Species*.



Cover of the picture book: *Prehistoric Life: The Definitive Visual History of Life on Earth*.

### Academic Books

Academic books are books that are highly technical in nature and cover some aspect-- perhaps even a very narrow or esoteric aspect--of a topic in paleontology. Such books can be difficult to wade through for the amateur, but they are an essential source of information. Some offer guides to a wide variety of fauna or flora found in a specific location, such as Edward Petuch and Mardie Drolshagen's 2010 *Molluscan Paleontology of the Chesapeake Miocene*. Others offer detailed analyses of the evolutionary history of a particular group of animals, such as Robert Carroll's 2009 *The Rise of Amphibians: 365 Million Years of Evolution*.



Examples of academic paleontology books in M. Hutchins' collection.

### Book Reviews

Book reviews are an excellent way to find out more about recently published books and decide whether or not to buy them. New books can be very expensive so it is best to be discerning. Book review authors read the books

of interest and do their best to capture the quality and content of the book in their review. Having written many book reviews myself (e.g., Hutchins, M. 2015. 225 Million Years of Evolution: The Rise of the Birds (book review), *The Rostrum* 24 (3): 13.), I also find that writing them is an effective way of learning.

### **Conclusions**

If you know what you are doing, collecting books about paleontology is almost as fun as collecting the fossils themselves. I have greatly enjoyed not only being an amateur paleontologist for the past couple of decades, I have also enjoyed collecting books on this fascinating topic. It has certainly helped make me much more knowledgeable.