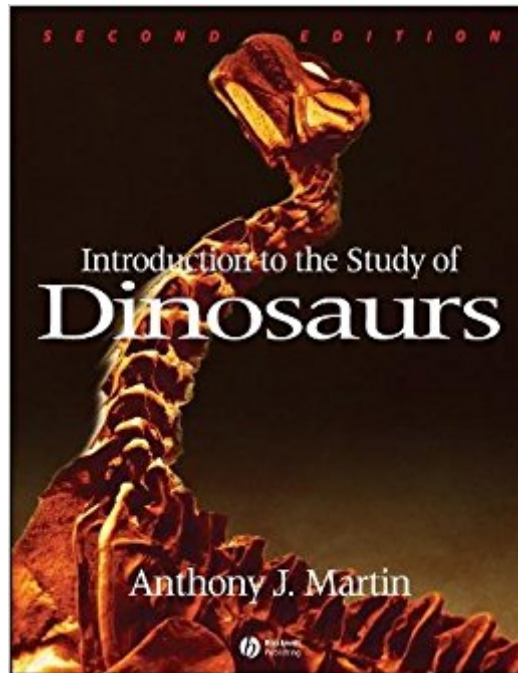




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Introduction To The Study Of Dinosaurs



information and links for further exploration. • Gus Winterfeld, Idaho State University

This is by no means supposed to be a comprehensive review of all dinosaurs. Instead, this book serves as a great introduction and review of the different subsets of dinosaurs, the differences and similarities between them, and the time periods they lived. The text and pictures are fantastic. This was the text used for my Dinosaurs class during undergraduate and I still have it. Great for a reference guide as well. As an aspiring paleontologist, I strongly recommend this book for any introduction to dinosaurs at a high school or college level.

This book has some very interesting topics within its pages. I rented this book for college and could have been more pleased with the speed of shipping and the ease of returning the book back.

This book is a fantastic update to the original volume(which I also have). The text is extremely informative and there are hundreds of photographs and diagrams. This second volume of Introduction to the study of Dinosaurs is highly recommended for anyone interested in these great animals.

I had to purchase this book for school and although I am no fan of dinosaurs I still found the book thoroughly interesting.

This is a superb introductory text for college-level students; it is a fun and dynamic way to access the natural history of dinosaurs. I am using this text for a college course I am teaching. The only shortcoming is that the publisher, unlike most up-to-date science-textbook publishing companies in working with their authors, provides neither a teacher's manual, A.V. materials, nor even suggested lab activities to accompany the text. With that said, I recommend Ward's Science Dinosaur Lab Activity Set, an excellent kit of six labs (which include genuine dinosaur fossils, trace fossils and replicas along with student worksheets) which perfectly supplements Dr. Martin's excellent book.

NOTE: I haven't read this book cover-to-cover (I have a loaner copy from Blackwell), so keep that in mind when reading. Another dinosaur textbook? This book competes directly with older dinosaur textbooks by Spencer Lucas and Fastovsky & Weishampel, as well as quasi-textbooks like the one by Dingus & Rowe. Martin's book covers much of the same ground, but has a different overall focus.

Whereas F & W's text is largely focused on dinosaurs themselves, Martin's new book focuses largely on using dinosaurs to teach broader, more all-encompassing concepts. In fact, it does this to such a degree that the title might better be "Introduction to Science via Dinosaurs." Of the 16 chapters in the book, only 11-15 deal directly with the different groups of dinosaurs. (A better organization for the book might be to put these chapters much earlier in the book, since the terms detailed in them are used in most of the earlier chapters!) Other chapters discuss topics of great importance to paleontologists, and therefore certainly deserve coverage in a book such as this! They include discussions of how science works (in the context of defining things and scientific methodology, Chapters 1-2), how/why paleo and geology are sciences (Chap. 3), history of dinosaur studies (Chap. 4), anatomy, histology & classification (Chap. 5), taphonomy (Chap. 6), ichnology (Chap. 7), eggs & nests (Chap. 8), feeding habits (Chap. 9), evolution (Chap. 10), and extinctions plus birds as dinosaurs (Chap. 16). Some concepts are covered elsewhere in the book, too (e.g., histology in the theropod chapter, genetics in the evolution chapter, paleobiogeography covered throughout the text, etc.) Aside from the above criticism, the organization of the book is pretty good. Each chapter opens with a hypothetical scenario designed to illustrate the importance of understanding the material presented in each chapter; the chapters end with summaries, suggested review/discussion questions and, in many cases, URLs for further information. The book contains numerous pictures and schematics, mostly in color (though most photos are, sadly, shrunken, darkened, and restricted to the page margins such that things described in the captions are invisible in the actual photo) - color photos are largely absent in other dinosaur textbooks (but their inclusion in Martin's book is probably the culprit for the high price for a cloth-back book!) Key terms (and names) are presented in bold throughout the book, though a few of the terms emphasized are rarely, if ever, used in day-to-day paleontology (e.g., "panaramittee"). There is a fairly extensive glossary and a nicely complete index. The text is quite explanatory, and mostly straightforward. In many instances, it's downright lighthearted (particularly in figure captions, which often use things like "English professors" for scale!) One thing that Martin's book presents that may scare some readers away is a quantity of math (algebra). Math is virtually absent in other dinosaur texts, but is used well here to demonstrate how paleontologists can quantify and analyze various aspects of their research (e.g., calculating the discharge and momentum of moving water to explain taphonomic sorting, speed as determined from footprints, the volume of an ellipsoid egg, Archimedes' displacement principle, and how radiometric ages are determined). Martin thoughtfully breaks using each equation into basic, numbered steps (something even most math books never do), making the appearance of the math much less daunting. Of course, for everything Martin

covers in the book, one could easily complain that any one subject is not detailed enough, or that some things were not covered at all, but as with all dinosaur textbooks, one must keep in mind that typical undergraduate courses, for which this book is clearly designed, are meant to do precisely what this book does: use dinosaurs as a locus for introducing many other sciences...that's "introducing," not "covering exhaustively." Even the 16 chapters in this book may be too many for a standard 12-week semester! The book is enough up-to-date to include important new finds as the feathered *Caudipteryx*, new Jurassic ankylosaurs, etc.) It is also quite even-handed in covering "hot-button" topics (e.g. presenting both the "pro-" and "anti-theropod" points of view on bird origins, as well as scientific ethics, including private collecting). Martin's book is a serious contender in the small but growing realm of texts aimed at using dinosaurs to introduce students to science as a whole. It is less "dinocentric" than others, but perhaps that is for the better, because it thus more adequately covers other scientific disciplines, thus providing a better overall tour through science as a whole. Martin notes in his preface that he considers himself an educator above all else, and this book clearly is intended to educate. Only the shrunken photos and rather prohibitive price (for a non-hardback) hold it back.

As a student of vertebrate paleontology, I find this book easy to read and extremely detailed. I loved this book and it featured two or three times the information as other dinosaur textbooks such as *Dinosaurs: The Textbook*, which I also own. I suggest those who want to learn technical knowledge on this subject to buy this book. Because this book is quite expensive I suggest buying it used. My used book was just like new. I have bought many of my dinosaurian books used and all have come in great condition.

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