

Table of Contents

Part I

The World of Dinosaurs	6
How Fossils are Formed	8
Digging up Dinosaur Fossils	10
Restoring Dinosaur Fossils.....	12
How Long Ago Did Dinosaurs Live?	14
Dinosaur Family Life.....	18
Are there Dinosaurs in the Bible?.....	20
Early Fossil Discoveries	22

Part II

Iguanodon	24
The Lightweights	26
Horned Dinosaurs	28
Plated Dinosaurs.....	32
Armored Dinosaurs	36
Duck-Billed Dinosaurs	38
Bone-Headed & Parrot-like Dinosaurs	42
Meat-Eating Dinosaurs	44
The Terrible Claws.....	50
Big Plant-Eaters	52
Flying Reptiles.....	58
Marine Reptiles	60
Evolutionary Fairy Tales.....	62
Ancestors of Birds?.....	64
Archaeopteryx	66

Part III

Effects of Sin	68
The Great Flood	70
Flood Legends	74
What Happened to the Dinosaurs?	76
Ice Age.....	78
Dinosaurs, Dragons & Beetles	80
Mysterious Creatures.....	84
Index	88

How Fossils Are Formed



A fossil is a part of an animal or a plant that has been dead a long time—usually thousands of years. In order for a plant or an animal to become a fossil (except under very special circumstances), it must be buried almost immediately after it dies. If an animal dies, and then just lies around on the ground or floats around in the water, it never becomes a fossil.

1 First of all, dead plants and animals—especially animals—decompose very quickly due to bacteria and natural chemical processes. Second, there are a lot of insects, worms, and animals (called scavengers) that eat dead things. Third, oxidation by oxygen in the air causes animals and plants to decompose. Finally, there are chemicals in water and the ground—such as acids—which decompose and dissolve everything, including bones and teeth.

2 What happens to a bone, a tooth, or a plant when it becomes a fossil? What usually happens is everything in the bone or plant is replaced, a tiny bit at a time, by minerals dissolved in the water that is in the ground. As water moves through the ground, it carries various kinds of minerals—such as silica (silicon dioxide [SiO_2]), calcite (calcium carbonate [CaCO_3]), and pyrite (iron disulfide, [FeS_2])—along with it. When the bones and teeth of an animal, or parts of a plant buried in the ground, become wet with this water, the mineral in the water replaces all the material in the bone, tooth, or plant, and it

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1. All dinosaurs not on Noah's Ark were drowned in the Flood.
2. Animal was buried rapidly as the Flood deposited soft layers of material that later turned to stone.
3. Fossilization occurred as the animal lay buried deeply beneath Flood sediment.
4. Fossils become exposed as the ground around animal erodes away.

becomes hard as a rock. In fact, it is now a rock, but it has almost the exact shape of the bone, tooth, or plant it replaces. It doesn't take millions or even thousands of years for something to become a fossil.

Someone found, down in an old abandoned mine shaft, a hat that a miner had lost 50 years earlier. The hat was as hard as rock. After lying at the bottom of the shaft in water with a lot of mineral, the hat had fossilized. The miner's soft hat was now a hard hat!

Once in awhile, very rarely, an animal is frozen quickly and stays frozen for several thousand years. For example, a few mammoths (huge woolly elephants) in Alaska and Siberia were somehow frozen very quickly thousands of years ago and have been found recently with their flesh still good enough to eat. The fossil bones of thousands of animals have been taken out of the La Brea tar pits in Los Angeles, California. The tar didn't keep the flesh of these animals from rotting away, but it did prevent the bones from decomposing or disappearing.

Fossil studies give us evidence of a worldwide catastrophe, such as a flood. We have already mentioned that a fossil is formed when a plant or animal is buried very quickly after it dies. If there is time for it to rot or decompose slowly, it will not retain its form or composition. A flood would cause sudden burial and provide a natural means of fossilizing their bones.

Fossils of dinosaurs and many other animals have been found in all parts of the world; many have been dug up in places where they could not survive the climate that exists there today. How could they have existed there? Apparently a drastic change in climate has occurred since that time.

Scientists agree that there was a drastic change of climate at one time in the earth's history, but they have many different reasons for it. Creationists believe that the Flood changed the earth's climate.

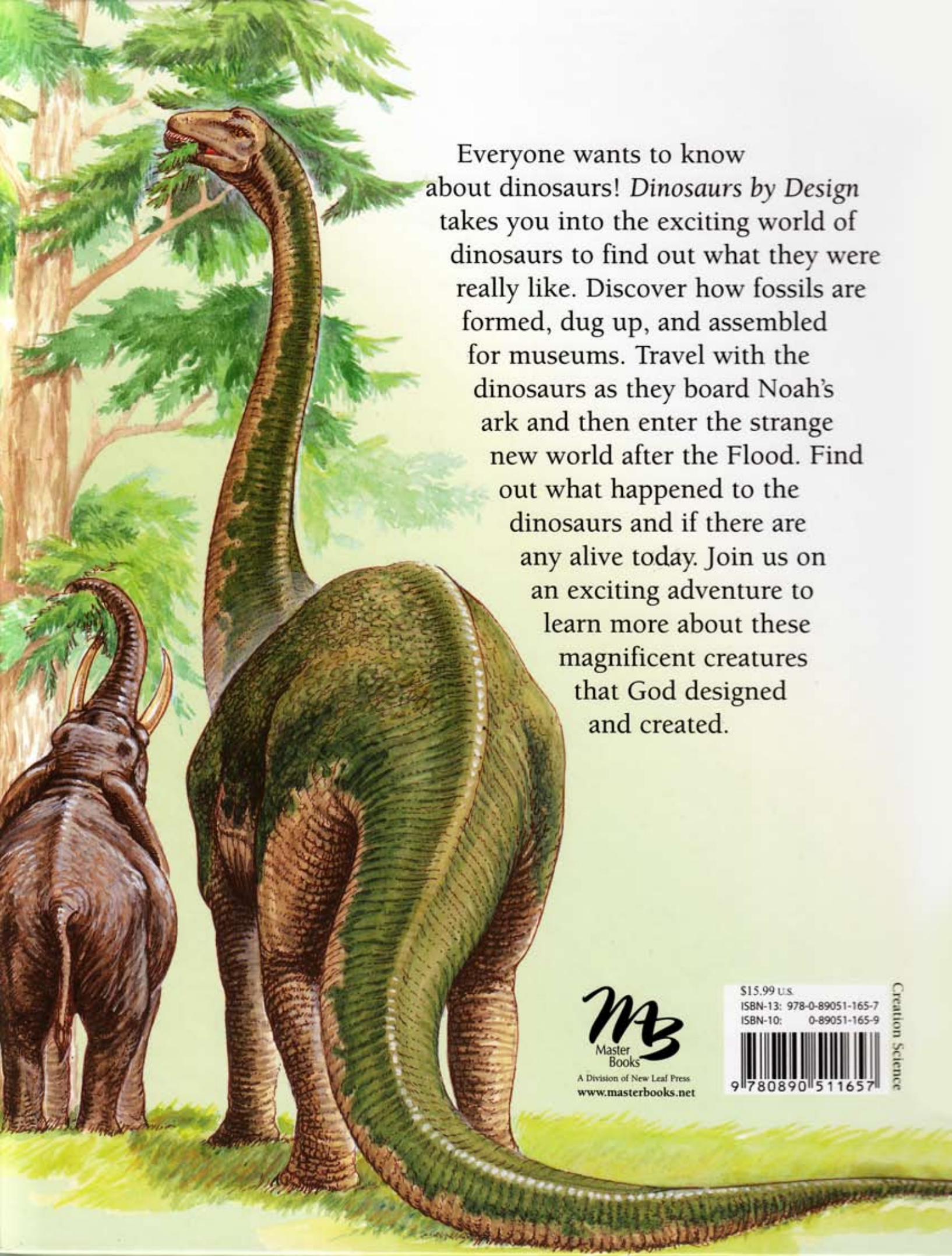


*Dinosaur
National
Monument,
Utah*



Fossils of dinosaurs have been found in just about every place in the world, from Alaska and Siberia to Antarctica. Many have been found in Canada, the U.S. (especially in some of the western states such as Colorado, Utah, Montana, and Wyoming), China, Mongolia, Europe, Africa, Mexico, South America, and Australia. Sometimes the fossils of many dinosaurs are found all jumbled together in a huge fossil graveyard, just as you would expect if they had been tossed around in a gigantic flood.

All we have left today to tell us about the creatures that roamed the entire earth long ago are the many fossil bones, fossil footprints, and fossil eggs. But finding them in areas where no dinosaurs could live today provides further evidence of the Flood as recorded in the Bible.



Everyone wants to know about dinosaurs! *Dinosaurs by Design* takes you into the exciting world of dinosaurs to find out what they were really like. Discover how fossils are formed, dug up, and assembled for museums. Travel with the dinosaurs as they board Noah's ark and then enter the strange new world after the Flood. Find out what happened to the dinosaurs and if there are any alive today. Join us on an exciting adventure to learn more about these magnificent creatures that God designed and created.

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