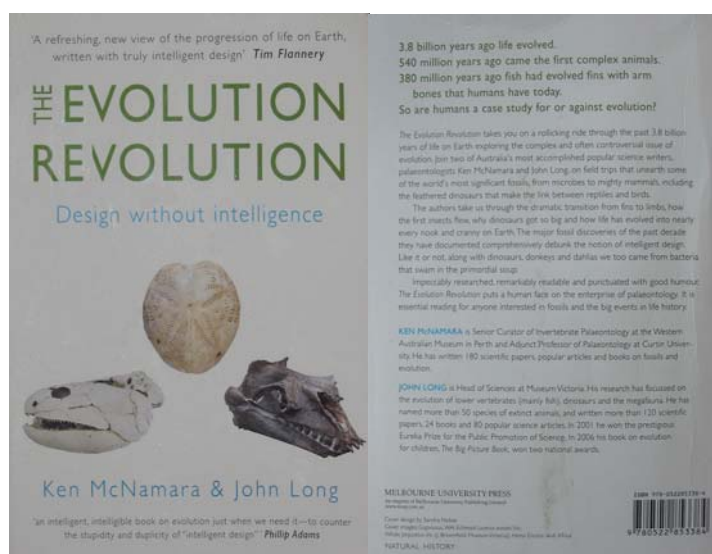


McNamara, K. & Long, J. 2007. The evolution revolution. Design without intelligence. - Melbourne University Press

Book review by M. Overbeeke



Delightful. The best word to describe this book. It's got a good lay-out with nice (black and white) pictures. The book starts at the beginning of time onto the evolution of mankind.

During my travel across Australia I am witnessing the vastness of this country. Big stretches of land have hardly been touched by people with a Eurasian heritage, let alone people looking for fossils. And still, a lot of remarkable and (one of the) oldest known fossils and ichnofossils of various kinds have been discovered in this country. Everything here is widespread and the same is true for palaeontological localities. Bear in mind that it is by far the flattest continent on Earth and therefore outcrops are limited. Then again, they have everything from one of the oldest rocks found, banded iron formations and stromatolites billions of years old, to the Ediacaran fauna, the oldest fauna of Metazoans, onto polar dinosaurs, and a megafauna of mammals only recently extinct with about the same debatable story as the EurAmerican Mammoth fauna (Reumer, 2007).

The book starts with an introduction into the processes of evolution as expected. After this it begins at the very beginning of life on Earth and associated rocks from Australia. Next it describes the beginning of the animals and vertebrates to the first fishes and the colonisation of the land. It not only focuses on vertebrates, but also on insect and plant evolution. Then the Mesozoica, dinosaurs, flying and marine reptiles and the first birds are highlighted, and finally the mammals with their remarkable evolution is described.

The book is written by two Australian palaeontologists. Living in a country like this it is very well possible to use fossils only from Australia, and the focus is obviously on that country, but they look at patterns in fossils from all over the world which is a surplus to the book. It is also clearly not an Intelligent Design book.

It is lightly written and is also meant to be read by people that are not really into the jargon of evolutionary palaeobiology. It is written as a travel story and a detective and is full of discoveries and the great ups in the life of a palaeontologist with a tinge of drama and a lot of humour. It takes you to 3,8 billions years back in time and brings you comfortably back to were you are now. Maybe the only comment is that they explain certain processes more than once throughout the chapters, and usually after the second time it becomes redundant. But, that's all... to go short, I would really recommend this book to anyone. A nice eye opener from the book is that you can ask anyone with recent knowledge in palaeontology: what was the first animal to have walked on the land, and most would reply without hesitation: the amphibian *Tiktaalik* (Daeschler *et al.*, 2006), but this is not true...

McNamara, K. & Long, J. 2007. The evolution revolution. Design without intelligence (2nd edition). - Melbourne University Press. 304 pp. ISBN: 978 - 052285338 - 4. Price: \$ 2.95 (paperback)

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Reumer J.W.F. 2007 (in press). Habitat fragmentation and the extinction of mammoths (*Mammuthus primigenius*, Proboscidea, Mammalia): arguments for a causal relationship.