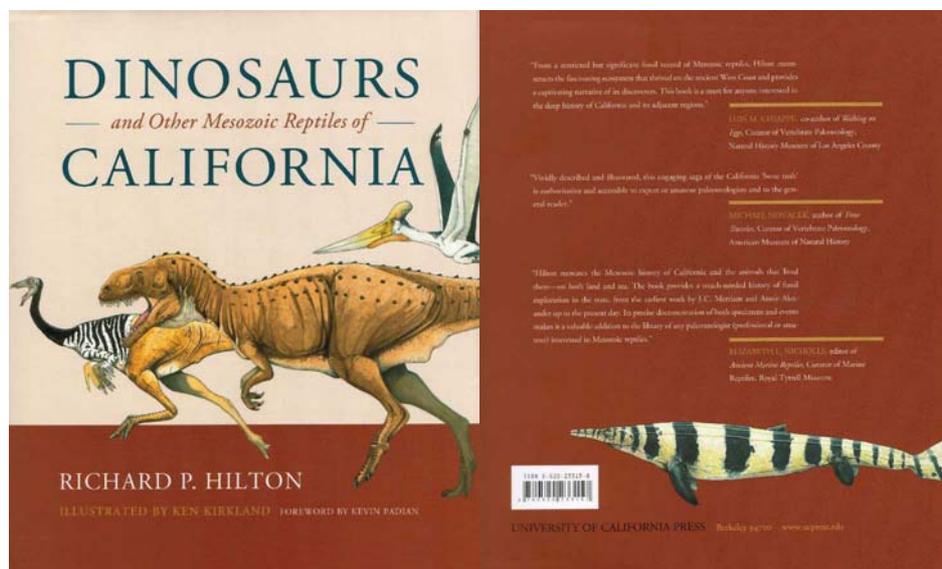


**Hilton, R.P. 2003. Dinosaurs and other Mesozoic reptiles of California. – Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press**

Book review by A.J. Veldmeijer



As a scientist, one of the jobs that takes up time is reading the ever increasing flow of literature...and most of the time it is the work you are occupied with most. It is often exciting, sometimes boring, but never ending. But if the job consists of reading books like “Dinosaurs and other Mesozoic reptiles of California” one feels lucky that this is actually one’s job!

As usual with books from the University of California Press, the book is conveniently arranged, with clear headings, clear and spacious pages and is absolutely beautifully illustrated. The reconstructions by Ken Kirkland are lively, vivid and true pieces of art. Also, the shadow drawings are of exceptional high quality. All photos are, without exception, clear and bright. But still a few comments can be made. Especially in the beginning of the book, references in the text to a few of the illustrations (figures 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.11, 2.2, 2.4 and 2.5) are missing. Always annoying in my opinion, are photographs whose subjects are not fully exposed, as seen in figure 1.17 and 4.37. Also missed are scale bars; although measurements are sometimes given in the text, a scale bar accompanying drawings, also reconstructions, would help enormously to gain insight in these extinct animals. But without any size indicator, it is really hard to imagine their size. The alternative way of putting knives with the objects, as for instance in figure 3.2, indeed provides the reader with a size indication...but how much would it take to put a scale bar with it? Foreign coins used as scale (figure 2.11) gives me, as European reader, only a very faint idea of the size of the bone. I strongly plea for the inclusion of a scale bar in the standard equipment of persons doing fieldwork. The fact that the measurements are in inches only is a pity; without a doubt the book was written for the American market (only?) and although inches can be calculated into cm, it still is annoying (besides, the metric system is used in science).

The book is divided into two parts. The first part discusses “California during the age of reptiles” whereas the second and larger part, “The history of discovery”, tells the, sometimes incredible, story behind all these fossils.

The first chapter deals with the geology of the state of California. After the first chapter, the subsequent chapters deal with the various fossil groups presented in separate chapters (“The dinosaurs”, “The flying reptiles” and “The marine reptiles”). The emphasis is on the presentation of the fossils with systematic palaeontology discussed only in passing. From this account, it becomes clear that the number of finds from each of the various groups is quite different, as are the places within the state that yielded various amounts of material. This is only partly due to the nature of the bones: the extremely fragile hollow bones of pterosaurs are not prone to fossilization, contrasting with the heavy bones of some dinosaurs.

The second part, heading “The history of discovery”, presents the “accounts of the scientist, teachers, students, ranchers, and weekend fossil hunters who endured (and continue to endure) harsh weather, fires, wild animals, and the usual challenges of fieldwork to collect fossil remains and make major discoveries”. It is divided in two chapters on the basis of geography; “The northern provinces” and “The southern provinces”.

Concluding, this vividly written book on the Mesozoic history of California and its animals is an important addition to the palaeontological section of the library of any amateur and professional palaeontologist

alike, as long as they do not expect systematic palaeontological accounts. The book provides a nice overview of the fossil assemblage and a detailed account on the history of palaeontology of California. It is especially interesting for people interested in the history of palaeontology. The book is an exciting and enjoyable read for palaeontologists and the general reader.

Hilton, R.P. 2003. *Dinosaurs and other Mesozoic reptiles of California*. – Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press. 318 pp. ISBN 0-520-23315-8. Price \$39.95 (clothbound).