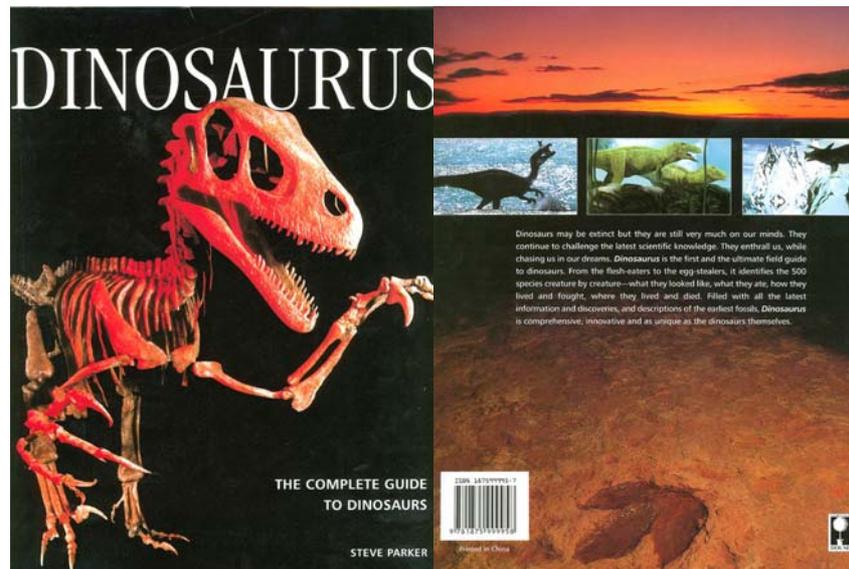


Parker, S. 2003. *Dinosaurus. The complete guide to dinosaurs.* – London, Quinted Publishing Ltd

Book review by A.J. Veldmeijer



Dinosaurs are hot. Many new fossils from famous sites, such as the Chinese Jehol Group (western Liaoning, northern Hebei and southeastern Inner Mongolia), together with a general increase in research, has greatly increased our knowledge on these and other extinct animals. The resultant stream of scientific publications in professional journals has been matched by an increase of semi-scientific and popular books, translating the scientific jargon in understandable prose. Many take the form of an encyclopaedia, and Parker's 'Dinosaurus' is just such a book. But what makes it stand out from the crowd?

The book is divided in 15 chapters, prefaced by a foreword and introduction, and closed by some small sections on the main fossil sites and a glossary. Each chapter starts with a beautiful 'cover' of two pages, after which is a short paragraph containing general information. For example, chapter five ('The great predators') discusses the size of meat eating dinosaurs, and whether they were hunters or scavengers.

Colour photographs, x-rays, dino factfiles (small blocks with a world map to show where the fossils were found, etymological information, pronunciation, etc.) all help the reader visualise these extinct animals and their environment, but a special mention must be made of the abundant use of beautiful artwork from various artists (such as Joe Tucciarone and Wildlife Art Ltd). Every page is decorated with reconstructed prehistoric animals, making the book fun to browse through, even without reading a single line!

'Dinosaurus' is remarkably up-to-date and includes the latest dinosaur finds. However, this is not always the case with the flying contemporaries of dinosaurs, the pterosaurs, discussed in chapter 14 ('Other creatures of the dinosaur age'). For example, current palaeontological consensus holds that the pterosaur presented as *Tropeognathus* in this book, should in fact be referred to as *Coloborhynchus* (in the case of *Tropeognathus robustus*) and to *Criorhynchus* (in the case of *Tropeognathus mesembrinus*). Furthermore, these pterosaur fossils have not been found in South America exclusively, as many fossils, albeit extremely fragmentary, come from England, including the holotype of *Criorhynchus*, mentioned by Parker. But the main subject of the book is dinosaurs, and these flaws are minor and forgivable, given the complexity of pterosaur taxonomy.

There has been some criticism that the book is aimed too high for younger readers, because of the scientific vocabulary and the treatment of some difficult concepts. However, I do not agree with this. As we all know, either by the experience of our own childhood, or by talking with children, that youngsters have an astounding scientific vocabulary and understanding of tricky concepts; I believe that those interested in buying such a book would also be perfectly capable of finding out all the things they do not understand: the book's own glossary gives a good starting point! In summary, this book is a must-have for anybody interested in dinosaurs, professional or layman alike, because it is by far the best popular encyclopaedia I have seen. Go to the (online) bookshop and buy the book right now!

Parker, S. 2003. *Dinosaurus. The complete guide to dinosaurs.* – London, Quinted Publishing Ltd. 448 pp. ISBN 187599995-7. Price \$32.97 (hardback).