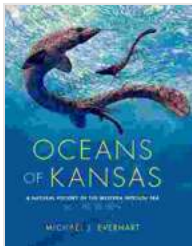


Natural History of the Western Interior Sea: Life of the Past

Deep beneath the rolling plains of the American Midwest lies a hidden world, a testament to a time when a vast inland sea covered the land. This ancient body of water, known as the Western Interior Sea, was a vibrant hub of life, teeming with an astonishing array of marine creatures.

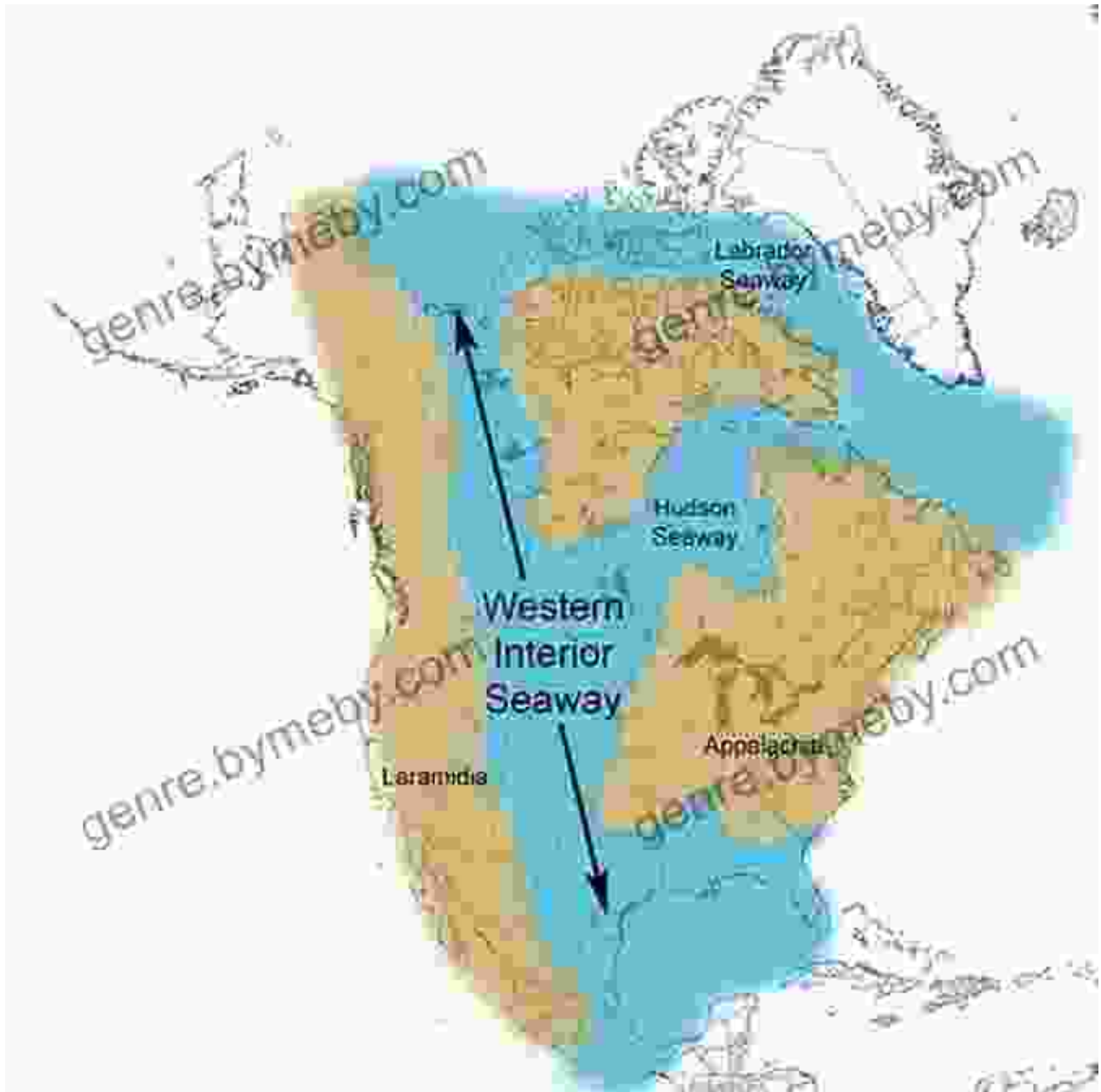


Oceans of Kansas: A Natural History of the Western Interior Sea (Life of the Past) by Michael J. Everhart

★★★★☆ 4.9 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 17497 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 834 pages
Lending : Enabled





A Journey through Time

The Western Interior Sea existed roughly 100 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period. It stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean, covering an area that is now home to 11 states. The sea was shallow and warm, providing an ideal habitat for a diverse array of marine life.

As the sea gradually retreated, it left behind a rich fossil record that has captivated scientists for generations. Fossils discovered in the Western Interior Sea have provided invaluable insights into the evolution of life on Earth, offering a glimpse into a bygone era that has long since vanished.

Extraordinary Biodiversity

The Western Interior Sea was home to an incredible diversity of marine life, including:

- **Ammonites:** These squid-like creatures had coiled shells that are often found as fossils. Some ammonites could grow to be as large as a car.
- **Belemnites:** These were squid-like creatures with torpedo-shaped shells. They were closely related to ammonites and their fossils are also commonly found.
- **Clams and Oysters:** These bivalves were abundant in the Western Interior Sea and their fossilized shells are often found in rock formations.

li>**Sharks:** The Western Interior Sea was home to a variety of sharks, including the giant Megalodon.

- **Rays:** Stingrays and eagle rays were common in the Western Interior Sea, and their fossils are often found in rock formations.
- **Lizards:** The Western Interior Sea was home to a variety of lizards, including the giant mosasaur.

- **Pterosaurs:** These flying reptiles were common in the Western Interior Sea, soaring over the water in search of prey.
- **Birds:** The Western Interior Sea was home to a variety of birds, including the Hesperornis, a flightless diving bird.

Geological Significance

The Western Interior Sea played a significant role in the geological history of North America. As the sea gradually retreated, it deposited layers of sediment that formed the bedrock of much of the Midwest. These sedimentary rocks contain a wealth of fossils that have helped scientists to reconstruct the ancient environment of the Western Interior Sea.

The Western Interior Sea also played a role in the formation of the Rocky Mountains. As the sea retreated, it left behind a vast plain that was subsequently uplifted to form the Rocky Mountains. The uplift of the Rocky Mountains created a barrier that prevented the Western Interior Sea from reforming, and the area has remained dry ever since.

Exploring the Lost World

Today, the Western Interior Sea is long gone, but its legacy lives on in the fossil record. Visitors to the American Midwest can explore the natural history of this ancient sea by visiting museums and fossil sites. The National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., has an extensive collection of fossils from the Western Interior Sea, including a life-sized model of a Tyrannosaurus rex. The Sternberg Museum of Natural History in Hays, Kansas, is located near some of the richest fossil beds in the Western Interior Sea, and offers visitors the opportunity to dig for fossils.

Exploring the natural history of the Western Interior Sea is a fascinating journey through time. By uncovering the secrets of this ancient sea, we can gain a deeper understanding of the evolution of life on Earth and the geological forces that have shaped our planet.

Additional Resources

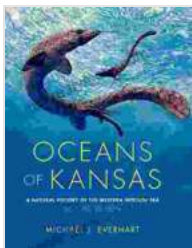
* [The Western Interior Sea]

(<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/western-interior-sea/>) *

[The Natural History Museum of the Western Interior Sea]

(<https://www.sternbergmuseum.org/>) * [Fossils of the Western Interior Sea]

(<https://www.fossilmuseum.net/fossil-sites-by-state/western-interior-sea/>)



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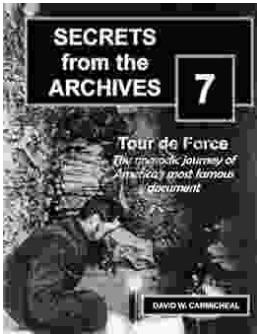
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