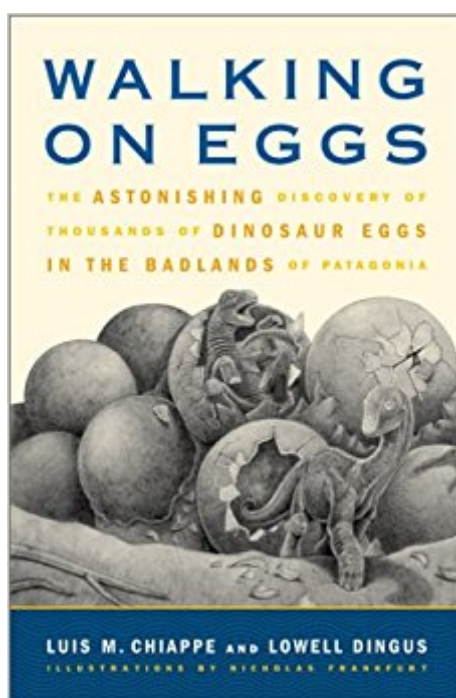


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Walking On Eggs: The Astonishing Discovery Of Thousands Of Dinosaur Eggs In The Badlands Of Patagonia



Synopsis

"Walking on Eggs" is the riveting inside story behind one of the most significant paleontological discoveries in history. In November 1997, Luis M. Chiappe and Lowell Dingus led an elite team of paleontologists and geologists into the rugged and desolate badlands of Argentina. Unsure of what they would find, Chiappe and Dingus knew that this region had produced many spectacular specimens of dinosaurs and fossil birds over the last century. Nothing could have prepared them, however, for the headline-grabbing discovery they were about to make: a massive dinosaur nesting ground covering more than a square mile and littered with tens of thousands of large, unhatched dinosaur eggs. Containing the first fossils of embryonic dinosaur skin ever found, the eggs gave rise to a host of mysteries. What species laid the eggs, and when? How were they preserved? And most intriguingly, what ancient catastrophe -- deeply rooted more than 70 million years in the past -- prevented them from hatching? In clear, comprehensible language, Chiappe and Dingus frame their scientific investigations within the context of a gripping detective story, illustrating how they used paleontological and geological evidence to establish the identity and age of the eggs, as well as how they established the cause of death. Chiappe and Dingus also recount a return trip to the badlands in 1999 in which they set out to learn more about dinosaur social and reproductive behavior. Their investigations once again unearthed a key piece of the historic puzzle: the bones of a twenty-foot predatory, carnivorous dinosaur. As they decipher the evidence -- divining origins, discovering identities, and pinpointing possible causes of extinction -- Chiappe and Dingus interweave their field adventures with chapters illuminating the crucial precedents behind their groundbreaking work. Complementing the text are beautiful hand-drawn reproductions of what the dinosaurs and their landscape might have looked like, created by an artist who joined the expedition team in Patagonia. Infused with passion and an infectious sense of awe, "Walking on Eggs" illustrates the ups and downs of the scientific process and invites dinosaur lovers of all ages to experience the exhilarating sense of discovery.

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Customer Reviews

In November 1997, paleontologists Luis Chiappe and Lowell Dingus came across a remarkable find on the cold plains of southern Argentina: a dinosaur nesting ground, where some ancient but unknown species deposited tens of thousands of eggs that never hatched. Their work, as they recount in this memoir of discovery, thus had many components: among other matters, Chiappe and Dingus needed to determine the creatures that had left their offspring in the Patagonian sandstone, how many millions of years ago they had done so, and what had happened to prevent the eggs from hatching in the first place. Finding the answer to the first occupies much of Chiappe and Dingus's account, as they compare their evidence against similar finds in Spain and the Gobi. Determining the second affords the authors a chance to discuss newly developed dating techniques, including DNA analysis--which caused overly enthusiastic reporters to announce that the authors were on the brink of cloning sauropods from long-dead embryos. ("We do not know nearly enough about how DNA works," the authors write, to pull off such a feat.) Finally, their reconstruction of the ancient environment of Patagonia offers clues for how the unlucky eggs had come to be buried in prehistoric mud. A spirited book about how paleontologists make and test hypotheses and go about their fieldwork, this makes a fine addition to any dinosaur buff's collection.

--Gregory McNamee

In 1997, paleontologists Chiappe and Dingus (Discovering Dinosaurs) led an expedition into the remote reaches of Patagonia. Just days into the excursion, the archeologists discovered the remains of a nesting site for a sauropod, a large, four-legged, thick-necked, vegetarian, semi-aquatic dinosaur. Dating back about 80 million years, the giant rookery was strewn with thousands of broken and unhatched fossilized eggs. Besides providing science long-sought proof that sauropods were egg-laying creatures, this field of prehistoric eggs also yielded the first fossils of embryonic dinosaur skin. Although the authors furnish detailed geological and paleontological background information, they write without scientific jargon, fortunately for lay readers. Through the

mostly conversational narrative, an intriguing story unfolds that offers insights into the mysteries surrounding this astounding archeological find. When were these eggs laid? What was the ancient geological environment? The climate? What destroyed the nests and eggs? Which predators hunted these local sauropods? The authors take the reader on a tour of deductive and inductive reasoning in order to establish plausible answers to these complex questions. This fascinating description of the vicissitudes of a successful dig from the exhilaration of an extraordinary skeletal find and the mundane minutiae that dominate a paleontologist's life in the field to the overwhelming and fleeting media response makes the reader feel like a member of the mission. 8 pages b&w photos; 24 line drawings. Agent, Edite Kroll and Samuel Fleishman, Literary Artists Representatives. (June) Forecast: Media generated by a touring exhibit of dinosaur eggs will help draw attention to this book. The exhibit will run from May to October at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, before traveling over the next three years to natural history museums in Mesa, Ariz.; Chicago; Atlanta; Berkeley, Calif.; and Portland, Ore. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

The book is a good summary of the discovery of sauropod eggs and nests, but it's essentially a retelling of Jack Horner's book about discovering the eggs and nests of hadrosaurs and troodontids 20 years earlier. If I were cynical, I'd say the authors sat down with Horner's book and used it as a point by point model of how to write. The narrative, layout, and even style of illustration is very similar and while I realize there's only so many ways to describe a paleontological discovery, I know there are better ways of writing and organizing the story. The illustrations are pretty bad too and do nothing to convey the impression of living, breathing animals. Instead, they look like bloated, balloon creatures escaped from a parade ground. An ok read, but not something that's especially compelling.

A fascinating and well written book about the discovery of thousands of unhatched dinosaur eggs in Patagonia. The authors write about their investigations using scientific, geological and paleontological evidence in a very readable and interesting way. Really enjoyed following their journey and adventures.

A worthy book and well worth reading if the subject holds interest for you. Generally college level reading.

In a highly readable account, the authors describe a 1997 scientific expedition to Patagonia, in the desolate, remote region of central Argentina, which results in the discovery of tens of thousands of fossilized dinosaur eggs. Some of the eggs contain the first fossils of embryonic dinosaur skin ever found. In the full flush of discovery, the team of scientists dub their new find 'Auca Mahuevo,' as a pun on the volcano Auca Mahuida around which the field is located, combined with 'mas' 'huevos' or more eggs, in Spanish. By means of a number of questions, which the authors then proceed to answer in successive chapters, the reader is lucidly led on the path of scientific discovery. For example, in one chapter, the authors ask and answer: "What Were We Searching For and How Did We Decide Where to Look?" There is one exception to this lucidity, however. In one chapter the authors feel it necessary to provide a primer on dinosaurs, in order to establish all the possible species whose eggs these could be. In my opinion this chapter was a total flop. If you are a dinosaur maven, it was probably unnecessary, and if you are not, as is my case, it was far too technical and dragged on and on. At the end of the 1997 expedition we are treated to the spectacle of an overflow press conference, with all types of media imaginable in attendance. Next, a 1999 expedition to Auca Mahuevo is described. In this expedition more evidence about egg laying patterns is gathered and another startling fossil discovery is made. A completely new species of dinosaur is found, and the fossil is collected and named: *Aucasaurus garridoi*. Finally, a 2000, Y2k expedition is described. On the whole, this is a very enjoyable read, with only a few dull spots, and I recommend it to you.

QUICK REVIEW This is a fairly good book about the discovery of dinosaur eggs (and a few other fossils) in Argentina and what scientists learned from studying them. An interesting book.
FULL REVIEW This book is written about a couple of things. Mainly it is the story of what a group of paleontologists discovered at a site in Argentina. They found a number of incredible fossils (some of which had never been seen before) and were able to piece together a picture of what Sauropod dinosaur embryos looked like and what happened to them. They mostly unearthed eggs but they also stumbled across two other skeletons. Overall it was amazing what they found. But the book is also about other things. Within the overall story we are given a history of other dinosaur fossil discoveries as well as lessons on different types of dinosaurs and their classification. We are given a timeline of when dinosaurs lived and some background on how paleontologists collect fossils. All of these things make up the book, so it is not just a simple telling of the story of the discovery. The book isn't fantastic but it is pretty good and generally keeps the attention of the reader. This is the kind of book where if you think you'll be interested in it, there's a good possibility you will but if you

aren't interested in it and don't think you'll enjoy it you almost certainly will not. For readers who think they'll be interested, the authors do a good job of taking you through the story by the excitement of discovery. You follow along with them as they come across one great find after another. Sometimes they get a little too technical for the average reader but at other times they don't give as much technical information as the reader may want. And the authors rely a little too much on evolution to try to explain things that aren't fully understood. Instead of just saying scientists don't know how something happened or that they can't figure out the whole story, they try to squeeze things into the box of general evolution just because they don't have any other answer at the moment. There are also some slow parts while they go off on a tangent now and then, but it basically flows pretty well and if the readers feel somewhat interested they probably will enjoy this book.

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