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Trilobites—A Visual Journey

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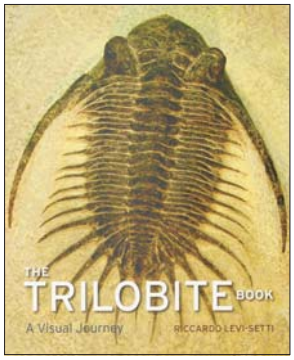
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Trilobites—a visual journey



Riccardo Levi-Setti 2014. *The Trilobite Book: A Visual Journey*. 288 pp. The University of Chicago Press. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0-226-12441-4. Price $45.00/£31.50.

There can be little doubt that the great age and diversity of trilobites, with more than 20,000 described species, has resulted in great interest in this remarkable extinct group by fossil collectors and professional palaeontologists alike. It is hardly surprising then that these photogenic fossils have formed the basis of a number of new books (http://research.amnh.org/paleontology/trilobite-book-reviews).

The book reviewed here is a rather unusual work, with the main body of the short text (it took me probably around four hours to read it all, including the figure legends) mainly consisting of personal anecdotes based on the authors' numerous various collecting trips around the world. It often refers to people who accompanied him or whom he met along the way; these names will be of little or no concern to most fossil enthusiasts or researchers. Nonetheless, it would appear from the acknowledgements that this is how the book was envisaged when the publisher first proposed the idea for this book to the author.

Following a short preface, an introduction explains how the author (who is a recognized authority on trilobites and the author of two other trilobite books) decided to compile this book and why he selected the colour images included. The following sections cover trilobite-collecting trips to Bohemia (= Czech Republic), Morocco, western North America, eastern Newfoundland, the United Kingdom and there is also a chapter on Russia (where the author has not visited). This is followed by a section about the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show, which includes a discussion fake trilobites; finally there is a short section on trilobite eyes. The book rounds off with the acknowledgements, references and an index to genera.

The chapters are supplemented throughout by 235 excellent colour plates (most consisting of a single photograph, rarely two) of trilobites, representing 138 named species, with a few more identified only to genus level. Some of these are new photographs of specimens that appeared in his earlier books. Unfortunately, there is no indication of suprageneric taxonomy, such as families or orders, so it will be impossible for those unfamiliar with trilobite systematics to determine how closely related the species illustrated are to each other. Similarly, the lack of an introductory section covering even very basic anatomy, means that newcomers to trilobites will need to search out other information sources in order to interpret the specialist morphological terminology in those cases where it appears in the figure legends.

In terms of production, the physical construction is excellent. There are only a couple of photographs that are slightly out of focus. I spotted slightly more minor typos and inconsistencies of style than I would normally expect from this publisher. These do not detract from the aesthetic value of the work, but I would have expected consistency in the reference style with regard to abbreviated versus full journal titles and any taxonomist would have questioned the inclusion of a non-published species name (pl. 38), referred to as a sp. nov., but which is clearly a *nomen nudum*. In summary, this is a very nice collection of trilobite photographs, compiled in a coffee-table-style book. The majority of the text will be of little value to most readers, but there are tiny snippets of useful information in there.

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