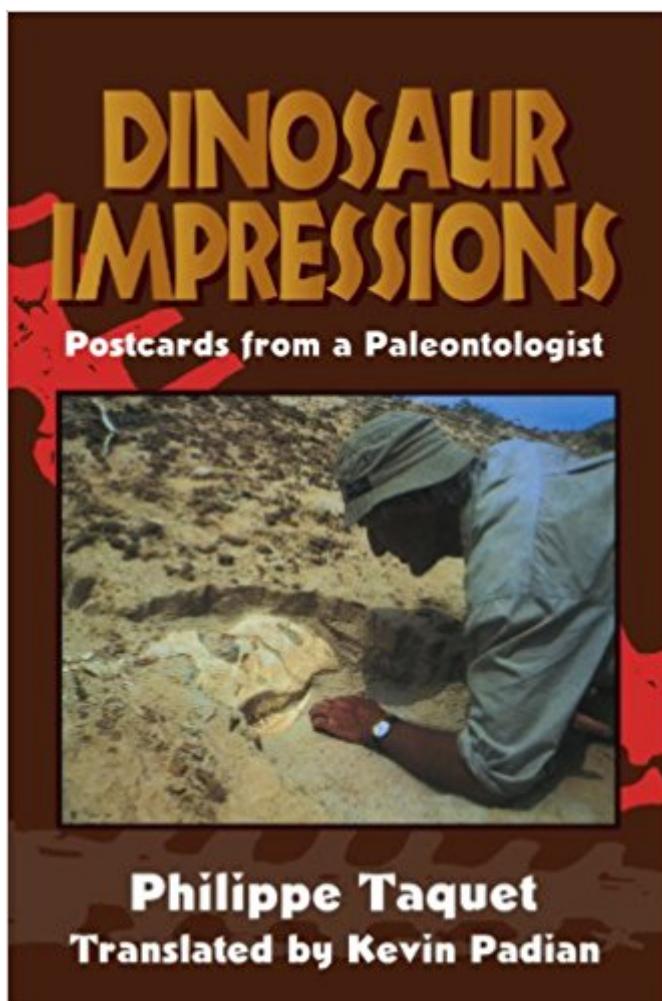


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Dinosaur Impressions: Postcards From A Paleontologist



Synopsis

Perhaps you are a paleontologist or have always wondered what it is like to be one. Or you are fascinated by fossils and like to read about the origins and natural history of dinosaurs. Or maybe you are an avid traveler and reader of travelogues. If you are any of these things, then this book is for you. Originally published in 1994 in French, *Dinosaur Impressions* is the engaging account of thirty years of travel and paleontological exploration by Philippe Taquet, one of the world's most noted paleontologists. Dr. Taquet takes the reader on a surprisingly far-flung tour ranging from the Provence countryside to the Niger desert, from the Brazilian bush to the Mongolian Steppes, and from the Laos jungle to the Moroccan mountains in search of dinosaur bones and what they have to tell us about a vanished world. With wry humor and lively anecdotes, Dr. Taquet retraces the history of paleontological research, along the way discussing the latest theories of dinosaur existence and extinction. Elegantly translated by Kevin Padian, *Dinosaur Impressions* provides a unique, thoughtful perspective not often encountered in American- and English-language works. This insightful, first-hand account of an exceptional career is also a travelogue par excellence that will enthral enthusiasts and general readers alike. Philippe Taquet is the Director of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris and is a member of the French Academy of Sciences. Kevin Padian is a professor in the Department of Integrative Biology and Curator of the Museum of Paleontology at the University of California, Berkeley. He is also the editor of *The Beginning of the Age of Dinosaurs* (Cambridge, 1986) and *The Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs* (1997).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The highlight of French paleontologist Taquet's illustrious career undoubtedly has been his discovery in 1964 of a new species of dinosaur?the ouranosaurus, a fin-backed, Cretaceous herbivore about as long as a limousine?that he unearthed in the Saharan wastes of Niger. In this memoir, first published in France four years ago, Taquet (The Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs) devotes two chapters to the creature's discovery and taxonomy, at times straining the patience of the general reader with odontological expositions. By contrast, his explanation of the history and science behind continental drift is remarkably elegant and economical. It's based on his work on the prehistoric crocodile remains in the Gabon basin?a croc with ancient relations in Brazil?that provided some of the first fossil evidence for the theory of continental drift and tectonic plates. Also detailed is Taquet's retracing, in Laos, of the steps of French geologist Josue-Heilmann Hoffet at a distance at some 60 years, to prove Taquet's suspicions that the dinosaurs his predecessor identified were iguanodontids?like his beloved ouranosaurus?and not hadrosaurs. Another adventure finds Taquet in Mongolia, roving the Gobi Desert and digging up enormous sauropods in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Though Taquet is prone to highly technical digressions, he is on the whole an engaging writer, one who has produced a book that's an oddly sweet mix of ephemera and hard science. 18 halftones and 22 line diagrams. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Excellently translated from the original 1994 French edition, *Dinosaur Impressions* is a fascinating mixture of scientific facts and vivid anecdotes. Renowned paleontologist Taquet relates his incredible 30-year hunt for dinosaur fossils from Africa to Asia, focusing on his exciting discoveries of dinosaur skeletons: Ouranosaurus (Niger 1965), Cetiosaurus (Morocco 1979), Mandschurosaurus (Laos 1990), and Tarbosaurus (Mongolia 1991). His survey includes unearthing and interpreting fossil eggs, skulls, and footprints. Taquet emphasizes the value of comparative anatomy research for understanding and appreciating dinosaur taxonomy, diversity, distribution, and evolution. He also offers glimpses into milestone theories in geology and paleontology concerning continental drift, the Archaeopteryx specimen, and dinosaur extinction. His own scientific fieldwork as a fossil hunter exemplifies the axiom "the more you look, the more you find." Both informative and captivating, this unique book is highly recommended for all academic and public science collections.?H. James Birx, Canisius Coll., Buffalo, NYCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

As most of us dinosaur fans in North America are familiar only with the great U.S./Canadian/Mongolian expeditions, I noted with delight that a book had finally arrived about French expeditions. For diversity alone, this one belongs on any dinophile's bookshelf. As Taquet is the discoverer and describer of Ouranosaurus (a likely missing link between the iguanadonts and duckbills), it's of particular interest to ornithopod lovers. Those familiar with the American Museum of Natural History will get a kick out of the cameo by the Mongolian expedition.

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