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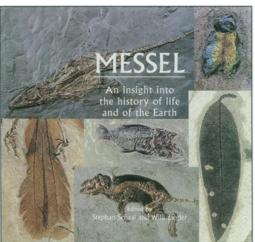


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The Eocene oil shales of Messel. near Frankfurt, are remarkable for the unusually complete and detailed picture they give of life some fifty million years ago. The abundant remains of animals and plants that are found there represent what is virtually a complete ecosystem, in an exceptional state of preservation. Not only the skeletons of the organisms are preserved, but also the soft tissues and stomach contents that are usually lost in the process of fossilization. There are both animals and plants: insects, fish, and amphibians; birds, ferns, conifers, and palms. All these fossils are described and lavishly illustrated in color in this book, and their ecology, biogeography, and evolutionary significance are discussed. There are also chapters on the process of fossilization and the history of the Messel site. This book will be of value not only to palaeontologists, but also to zoologists and botanists — and indeed to all who are interested in the history of life on the earth.

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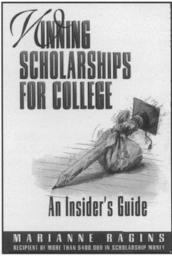
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