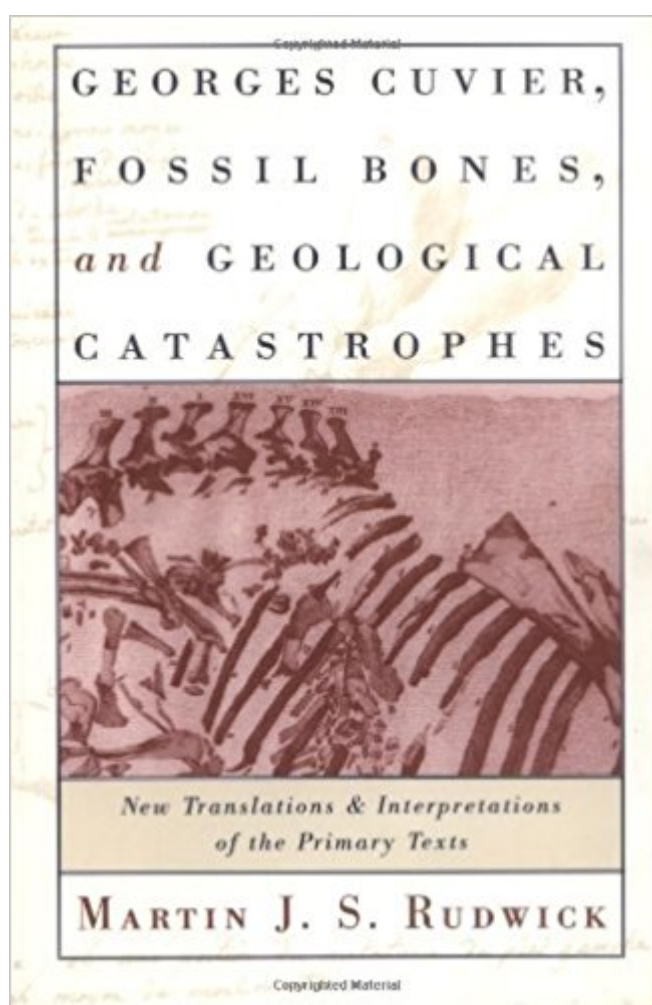


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Georges Cuvier, Fossil Bones, And Geological Catastrophes: New Translations And Interpretations Of The Primary Texts



Synopsis

French zoologist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) helped form and bring credibility to geology and paleontology. Here Martin J. S. Rudwick provides the first modern translation of Cuvier's essential writings on fossils and catastrophes and links these translated texts together with his own insightful narrative and interpretive commentary. "Martin Rudwick has done English-speaking science a considerable service by translating and commenting on Cuvier's work. . . . He guides us through Cuvier's most important writings, especially those which demonstrate his new technique of comparative anatomy." —Douglas Palmer, *New Scientist*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

French zoologist and geologist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) is remembered largely for opposing pre-Darwinian theories of evolution and instead advancing his theory of catastrophism. When evolution took the fore, many of Cuvier's ideas were swept aside. Martin J. S. Rudwick makes a good case, in this edition of several of Cuvier's key papers, for restoring the scientist to currency; his ideas anticipated modern research in mass extinctions and what Stephen Jay Gould calls "punctuated equilibrium." This collection is especially interesting in tracing the formation of Cuvier's ideas on the fossil record--another idea we owe to him. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Martin J. S. Rudwick is professor emeritus of history at the University of California, San Diego and

affiliated scholar in the Department of the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge.

In April 1796 Georges Cuvier read a paper he had written, entitled *Memoir on the Species of Elephants, Both Living and Fossil*, to the National Institute in France. Besides establishing that African and Indian elephants were different species, it established that mammoths were a separate species from any living elephant and therefore must be extinct. Thus for the first time establishing the fact of extinction. It is one of the foundation documents of paleontology, and of the 19th century catastrophist school of geology. An argument could be made that it is the most important publication in the history of the natural sciences prior to *The Origin of Species*. This book has the only English translation of a significant portion of it that I have ever been able to find and it is only one of several texts from Cuvier, Rudwick has translated for this book. Rudwick's comments accompanying the translated texts do a good job of placing them in their proper historical context. This book is obviously not for everyone, but anyone really interested in the historical development of the natural sciences, especially paleontology, zoology and geology will find it fascinating.

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