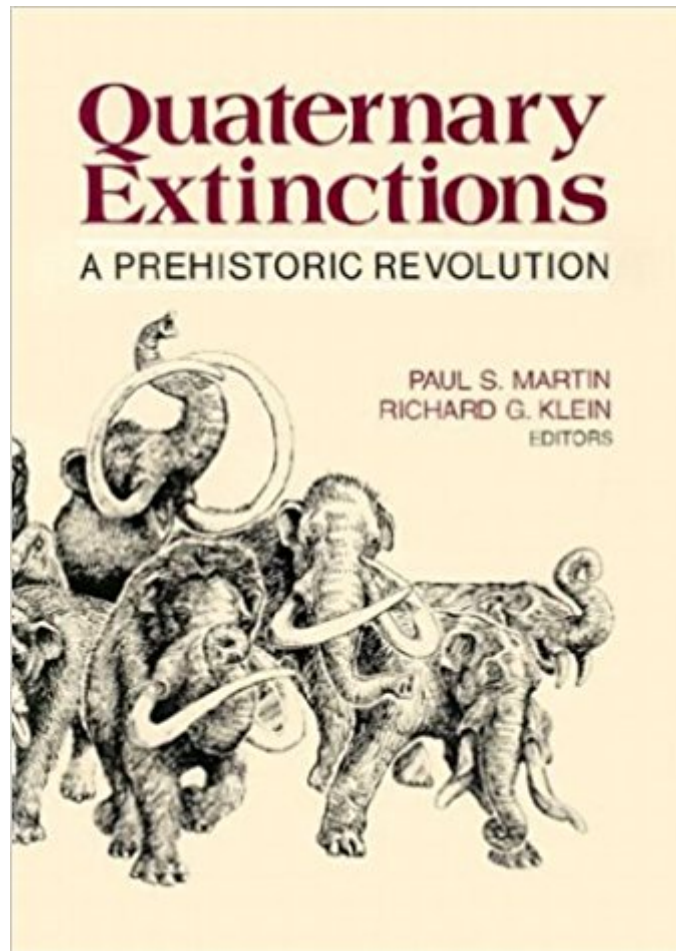




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Quaternary Extinctions: A Prehistoric Revolution



Synopsis

"What caused the extinction of so many animals at or near the end of the Pleistocene? Was it overkill by human hunters, the result of a major climatic change or was it just a part of some massive evolutionary turnover? Questions such as these have plagued scientists for over one hundred years and are still being heatedly debated today. Quaternary Extinctions presents the latest and most comprehensive examination of these questions." â "Geological Magazine "May be regarded as a kind of standard encyclopedia for Pleistocene vertebrate paleontology for years to come." â "American Scientist "Should be read by paleobiologists, biologists, wildlife managers, ecologists, archeologists, and anyone concerned about the ongoing extinction of plants and animals." â "Science "Uncommonly readable and varied for watchers of paleontology and the rise of humankind." â "Scientific American "Represents a quantum leap in our knowledge of Pleistocene and Holocene palaeobiology. . . . Many volumes on our bookshelves are destined to gather dust rather than attention. But not this one." â "Nature "Two strong impressions prevail when first looking into this epic compendium. One is the judicious balance of views that range over the whole continuum between monocausal, cultural, or environmental explanations. The second is that both the data base and theoretical sophistication of the protagonists in the debate have improved by a quantum leap since 1967." â "American Anthropologist

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Customer Reviews

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Paul S. Martin is a professor emeritus of geosciences at the University of Arizona.

This is a must have book for any fan of Ice Age megafauna. It is very scholarly and indepth, covering a range of creatures from all over the world. It discusses not just famous examples like the mammoth, mastodon, ground sloth and sabre-toothed cat, but also a range of lesser known creatures. The coverage on Australian species is particularly great, and there are excellent line drawings on a number of these fascinating creatures. The book also details a range of possible explanations for the global extinctions of these giant creatures, from climate change to human interference and hunting pressures. This book is the best of its kind and provides the best research for this topic.

excellent

This book is not for the novice. However, it is an excellently organized and drafted presentation of 40 papers on the variously submitted causes for the extinction of many dominant and marvelous animals, from the end of the Ice Age to our own time. Since no formal records were kept on this decline, even though many vanishings occurred during the time of record-keeping people, the scientist is left to investigate and to hypothesize on the cause or causes of the extinctions.

Recorded here are many of those investigations and their results. The diversity of opinion is an exciting testament, not only to the ingenuity of the investigators, but to the processes of science itself. Some investigations are restricted, both in terms of time, area, and species. Others are far broader, even global in scale. It would appear from a perusal of the articles that climate and consequent botanical change, or the coming of man into a successful hunter, were the primary cause(s) of the tragedy. But, as some contributors note, other causes may be relevant as well. Among the notorious RECENT extinctions discussed are the mammoth, less than 3,500 years ago, the Irish elk, in 500 A.D., or so, the moa of New Zealand, the Aepyornis, or elephant bird, and the giant lemur, both of Madagascar, within possibly the last 200 years. It seems germane that the islands, where man arrived only in the past 200 to 500 years, had the last megafauna to disappear, but, of course, the process goes on even in our own time, as witness the mountain gorilla, black rhinoceros, Javanese Tiger, Tasmanian Tiger, passenger pigeon, etc. As noted at the outset, some background in Ice Age paleontology is probably necessary for a full enjoyment of this book. If you haven't one, I suggest that you read "The Ice Age Animals of North America", by Ian Lange, and then read this book. The volume at hand is one of the most fascinating books I have ever read. I'd give it ten stars, if I could. As to persons who have some scientific background, my recommendation is off the scale.

This is the best, most comprehensive treatment of available data (which has grown some) and theories (which have grown but not multiplied) on land vertebrate extinctions of the last 100,000 years. If you are a mammoth/sabertooth extinction hound, this book will feed you better than any other. It does require some specialized knowledge in a few chapters, but the gist is accessible for the educated layperson. It's worth hunting for or buying used. A more recent offering, though briefer, is "Extinctions in Near Time," Ross MacPhee, ed. I appreciate the candor in labeling two of the major sections, entitled 'the theoretical marketplace: geologic-climatic models' and 'the theoretical marketplace: cultural models' which encompass variations on each of the two main theories for the extinction. In addition to theories, the book describes the various mammals as well as their pattern of disappearance region by region worldwide. At 867 pages, it will keep you going for a while, but it's worth every page. There is only one chapter on birds, only passing references to a tortoise, lizard, or fish, and nothing on plants. I would love to find similar treatments for changes in characteristic flora for the same time period.

Although over 15 years old, this book is the best, most comprehensive treatment of available data

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I found this book in college while I was doing some independent study. This is one of my top 5 books. I highly recommend it.

This is THE reference on Quaternary extinctions. The beauty of this book is that it isn't just one person's opinion, but a collection of well-researched articles on Quaternary topics by some of the top minds in the field. College students, especially in the biosciences and geography disciplines, **BUY THIS BOOK AND KEEP IT HANDY!**

Being a French speaker, I didn't have any problem understanding it and reading it. The subject is really well covered and written by many scientists. Many causes are explained.

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