



Solving the Mystery of the First Animals on Land: The Fossils of Blackberry Hill

Kenneth Gass

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This is the first book to cover the unique group of rock outcrops in central Wisconsin that appears to have put an end to a 150-year-old mystery of global interest. Since the mid-1800s, fossilized trackways and footprints have been found on beach deposits that date back to the Cambrian Period, some 500 million years ago in what is now North America - but fossils of the animals that made them were reluctant to reveal themselves. Thanks to Blackberry Hill, the identity of some of the first animals to walk on land is a secret no more.

Numerous color photographs of spectacularly preserved tidal flat trackways, animals, and parts of the habitat itself, all set in stone, help to tell the story of some of the first animals to explore this strange, new, and presumably hostile environment. Current interpretations made possible by the fossil discoveries are presented, including how some of the trackways were made and what might have lured the animals ashore. Peculiar, winding trackways from giant, slug-like organisms and other boneless animals are shown covering entire surfaces. This book also reveals other surprises discovered at Blackberry Hill including body and trace fossils of another tidal flat dweller never before found in rocks as old as these, and the first evidence showing that large jellyfish were abundant in Cambrian times and were already subject to mass strandings. In this book, Kenneth (Chris) Gass thus demonstrates why Blackberry Hill holds a special place in the history of life on Earth.

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