

biased in my opinion of the authors' carelessness as they magically translocated the study site in a paper by me from Ottawa to Quebec City (page 219).

Also not been changed from the previous edition, is the format of the range maps. While the map of continental USA is professional-looking, many of the borders of Canadian provinces still look as if they were quickly scrawled in with a black marker. More importantly, the content of the Canadian distribution is not always accurate. For example, the map of the Snapping Turtle clearly indicates it is found no farther west than Saskatchewan (which is basically accurate), yet on the same page, the text states it is found as far west as Alberta. The map for the Spotted Turtle omits all of eastern Ontario from the distribution, but includes Quebec, despite the text correctly stating that

the species is no longer known to occur in that province. And the map for the Stinkpot omits all of eastern Ontario. Canadian content is also neglected in the conservation section. Species listed by the IUCN or CITES or the USA's Endangered Species Act are itemized in an extensive table, but those listed by the Canadian Species at Risk Act are overlooked completely.

Despite my complaints, this second edition is an impressive accomplishment. Summarizing so much information is a daunting task and this book provides an amazing gateway into the vast body of scientific literature on North American turtles. Just keep in mind the old adage: don't believe everything you read.

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### The Link: Uncovering Our Earliest Ancestor

By Colin Tudge (with Josh Young). 2009. Little, Brown and Company (a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc.), 3 Centre Plaza, Boston Massachusetts 02108 USA. 272 pages. 28.99 CAN.

Every scientist has a dream of making a big discovery with great impact on his or her field of research. Perhaps no better is this epitomized by a palaeontologist discovering a pristine fossil with possibly grand importance on the evolution of animal life and bearing on our own evolution as human beings. In this book, Colin Tudge describes such a finding in "Ida", a forty-seven million-year-old specimen and the most complete primate fossil ever found. He aims to convey the excitement of this most unusual fossil discovery and describe the importance of the specimen to our understanding of primate evolution. Unearthed by a private fossil collector, the specimen (given the scientific name *Darwinius masillae*) was unveiled to Norwegian palaeontologist Jørn Hurum and later sold under much secrecy to Oslo's Natural History Museum, where it is currently on display.

The book starts off in prose style, as Tudge tells a story of what might have happened as Ida perished long time ago in Eocene times, drowning in a lake with unusually fine conditions for specimen preservation. The site is now known as the Messel Pit, a superb location for fossil hunters just 35 km southeast of Frankfurt, Germany. Once the prosaic tale of Ida is told, the book transforms into a more common form of popular science writing, including detailed descriptions of the specimen itself. However, there is only so much you can tell about a fossil specimen. Tudge expands his book by rather nicely weaving in other aspects of interest, including palaeontology, climate history, the

rise of mammals, primate evolution, and ultimately our own evolution as humans. The result is a rather nice glimpse into how evolutionary science, through the addition of a myriad of small puzzle pieces, aims at an overall understanding of the evolution of life on this planet. However, the book feels repetitive at times, and too much emphasis is spent on how fantastic this particular fossil find is. No doubt Ida is a valuable specimen, but as the book was released immediately following the scientific publication describing the find (Franzen et al. 2009), it is simply too early to tell just how valuable; scientific progress is made only via the continuous critical evaluation of new evidence against old, not through self-proclaimed excellence. Critical readers with a background in science will therefore dislike the salesmanship flavour of the *The Link*. Indeed, Jørn Hurum decided to orchestrate launch of the fossil in a combined scientific and public event. On the other hand, readers with a non-professional interest in science and palaeontology in general may enjoy the book as a fascinating story, especially as it touches upon our own history.

#### Literature Cited

Franzen J., P. Gingerich, J. Habersetzer, J. Hurum, W. von Koenigswald, and B. H. Smith. 2009. Complete primate skeleton from the Middle Eocene of Messel in Germany: morphology and paleobiology. *PLoS One* 4(5): e5723. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0005723.

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