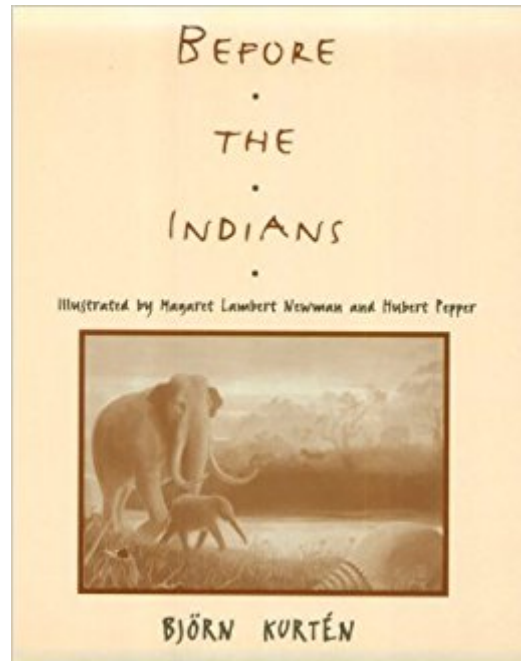




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# Before The Indians



## Synopsis

In this illustrated work, Kurten offers a vivid panorama of vertebrate animal life as it unfolded during the more than three million years before humans came to the New World.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kurten, author of *How To Deep -Freeze a Mammoth* ( LJ 8/86) here presents a popular version of his *Pleistocene Mammals of North America* , co-authored with Elaine Anderson (Columbia, 1980). He organizes material by geologic age and by major fossil sites. This approach facilitates his discussion of paleontological techniques and theories and allows him to sketch whole communities, such as the Late Pleistocene fauna at the Rancho La Brea tar pits. A weakness is the large section of drawings, most of which are murky and uninteresting (though the captions are good). Otherwise, this attractive and informative book should appeal to a wide audience. Beth Clewis, Duke Univ. Lib., Durham, N.C. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What was North America like before the Indians entered? Here at last is an up-to-date popular book, a who-was-who of mammoths, mastadons, ground sloths, glyptodons, extinct horses, llamas, camels, brush oxen, sabre-tooth and scimitar-tooth cats, condors, and teratons, to name some of the furred and feathered cast of the last million years. . . . In 28 plates and smaller figures, we glimpse the authentic American wilderness [of the time]. -- American Scientist

Great companion book to Kurten's *Pleistocene Mammals of North America*. Before the Indians is less technical than *Pleistocene mammals* and has some interesting stories and facts about prehistoric mammals. Two thumb up.

Dr. Kurten's status as the pre-eminent expert on Ice Age megafauna is unchallenged. One of the most fortunate facets of this professor's expertise is his ability to transmit the fruits of that vast knowledge to his readers in a lively, interesting, easily readable, and well-organized fashion. This book is an apt example. Without overwhelming the reader by overuse of taxonomic names, statistics, or anatomical terms, Dr. Kurten offers a novel view of the Ice Age animals that dominated North America before the coming of man. Rather than preceding along anatomical or taxonomic lines, Dr. Kurten moves forward through time, beginning in the Pliocene epoch that immediately preceded the Quaternary period. Dr. Kurten divides the time period by use of the Blancan, Irvingtonian and Rancho LaBrea periods, rather than through more traditional European time periods. By use of these American-based dividing lines, he is enabled to discuss not only individual North American species, but how the American animal community evolved and prospered into one like the world has never seen. The reader is not only treated to discussions about familiar animals such as the sabertoothed cat, and the mammoth, but can be exposed to and learn about such creatures as the scimitar cat, the Florida cave bear, the American camel, zebra and lion, and giant extinct condors, among many others. You will learn about the evolution of bison, and about the many animals that migrated to the Americas from Eurasia over the exposed Bering Straits during the height of the Ice Age. The book is unendingly fascinating, and one wishes he or she could be transported in time back to the day when these now-departed creatures made the American plains and forests teem with life. I recommend this book very highly to all, especially high schoolers with a little scientific background.

Kurten et al have described the wonderful variety of large mammals that lived in North America for millions of years, until as recently as 13,000 years ago. Saber- and scimitar-toothed cats, camels, sloths, mastodons, lions, cheetahs and other animals combined to make North America a teeming home to large game more diverse than Africa now has. Many fine illustrations accompany the text. The book is well-written, easily accessible to the interested lay person and does not require college level understanding of morphological bone analysis. Having been to southern Africa in 1997, I now cannot drive or hike through rural North America without imaging mammoths, tapirs, bear-sized beavers, one-ton running bears, and glyptodonts coming to the watering holes and

browsing and grazing their way across the landscape. For a comprehensive college-level treatment, see "Quaternary Extinctions," Paul Martin and Richard Klein, editors.

I have been looking for information about the size of *Panthera Atrox*, the Giant American Lion and information of other mammals of the past and finally I found it here in this complete book.

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