

{ LIFE }
A JOURNEY

THROUGH TIME

In his new book an acclaimed photographer captures the beauty and complexity of the earth's history, from its earliest stirrings billions of years ago to the majestic landscapes and wildlife that have evolved ever since.

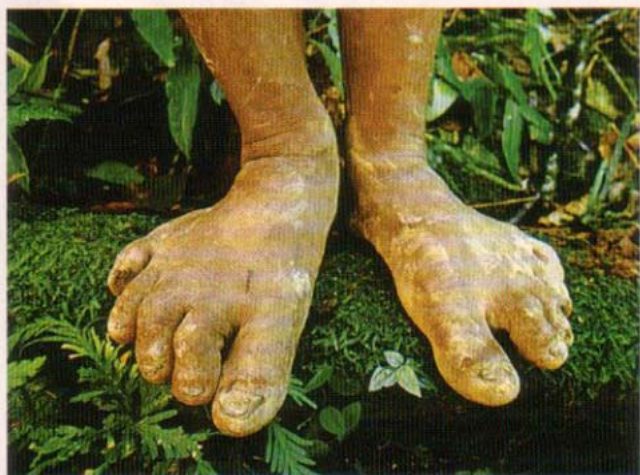
BY FRANS LANTING

One spring evening

seven years ago, I stood at the tide line of an estuary in the eastern United States, watching something that took me far back in the past. I saw horseshoe crabs come out of the water to spawn, an ancient ritual that goes back hundreds of millions of years. That experience made me realize that I could see the past in the present. And I wondered whether it might be possible to tell the story of life on earth from its earliest beginnings to its present diversity by capturing images that evoke nature through time.

Ever since that encounter with horseshoe crabs, I've been on a personal journey through earth's history, looking for situations in the natural world that provide a window into its past. This involved exposing cameras to all kinds of extremes, and working by twilight and moonlight. For example, to photograph an erupting volcano in Hawaii, I wore a respirator to guard against the caustic fumes that corrode camera parts and lungs alike. In other instances, such as when working underwater, I floated around coral reefs in a world of fluid motion, searching for early forms of marine life.

Nature in most places appears as a chaotic mosaic of species that live together in the present but have their origins in different geological periods. My goal, with these photos, was to create a sequence of images



GERMANY

ARCHAEOPTERYX

The imprint of this winged creature, which died 150 million years ago on the shoreline of a warm lagoon, was discovered in a limestone quarry in 1860; the exquisite fossil was later heralded as the missing link between birds and dinosaurs.

NEW JERSEY

HORSESHOE CRAB

On a spring evening on the shore of Delaware Bay, an army of horseshoe crabs crawls out of the sea to spawn.

AUSTRALIA

DESERT SPADEFOOT FROG

Preceding pages: Emerging from a long slumber, a frog stares out from a patch of wet sand in the continent's center.

PERU

HOMO SAPIEN

The feet of an Ashaninka Indian; this man has never been outside of the Peruvian Amazon.



CALIFORNIA
LAND SNAIL

In the photographer's backyard in Monterey, a land snail slides along a trail of slime; snail shells have their origins in the sea, where they evolved as a defense against predators.

CONGO
BONOBOS

These apes, found only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, live most of their lives in trees. When on the ground, they tend to walk on their knuckles, like this female and infant.

that can be viewed as slices through time. My approach has been that of a storyteller who draws on characters for the sake of telling a larger tale.

We are living in extraordinary times: Our knowledge about life on earth is growing rapidly through advances in science that increase our understanding of the interconnected nature of life. That realization has inspired my work.

At the beginning of my

career, I started out as a wildlife photographer pursuing animals on an individual basis. As I learned more about their lives, my view grew to include their habitats, and animals became ambassadors for ecosystems. Then I came to understand that the multitudes of species reflected the awesome biodiversity on earth.

Yet every one of these living organisms has a unique origin. And I emerged from this journey with a different sense of myself in time. These photos are my tribute to the kinship and continuity of all life on earth. ■



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