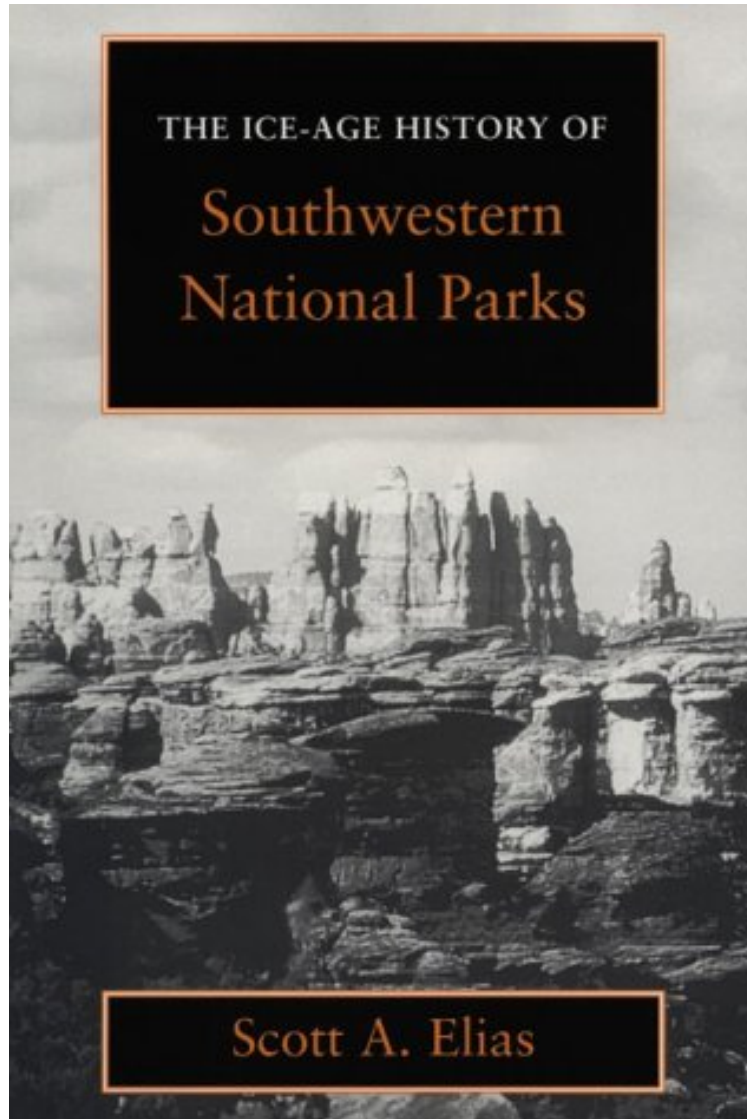


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# The Ice-Age History of Southwestern National Parks

*Scott A. Elias*

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**Scott A. Elias : The Ice-Age History of Southwestern National Parks** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ice-Age History of Southwestern National Parks:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A very well-written natural history of the Ice AgeSouthwestBy Jerald R LovellAuthor Elias is an expert in Ice Age ecology, and has published several books on the subject. This is one of the best. Beginning with a four-chapter section on why it is important to study ecological systems of the past, the book takes its reader through the various Ice Age fossils of the Southwest, the types of material in which they are

found, how they are dated, and nicely sums up this data with a chapter on how this data is pieced together to provide a tableau of past ecologies in an area. Attention then turns to various national park localities in the Southwest, including Canyonlands, Grand Canyon, Big Bend, and various Anasazi ruin parks. Each chapter discusses the various extinct animal finds in and around the named park area, and also includes information on past climates, flora, and effect of human cultures. Among the vanished animals expertly discussed are the short-faced bear, shrub ox, American lion, American camel, and two varieties of ground sloth. Locations of finds for each of these creatures are described and shown on generalized maps. I was impressed by the depth of research and the excellent writing style. The maps are somewhat vague, however, and I was disappointed in a lack of color photography. These are small detractions from the overall quality of the book, and I would heartily commend the book to anyone with an interest in the Ice Age, paleontology or ecology, or in the Southwest. If this describes you, then I especially recommend that you buy the book before you go to any of the named parks on a trip.

With its warm, dry climate and abundance of caves and rockshelters, the Southwest is a repository of fossils that provide unparalleled opportunities to study the ancient past. During the last ice age - more than 10,000 years ago - the desert regions of the American Southwest flourished, with conifer woodlands blanketing a landscape where camels, mammoths, dire wolves, short-faced bears, and ground sloths thrived. Recreating the past landscape and life forms of the Southwest, this guidebook examines a pivotal period in the ecological history of five southwestern national parks - Canyonlands, Grand Canyon, Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Big Bend - recounting as well the coming of humans to the region and the ascendance of the ecosystems we see today. Drawing on fossil evidence from cave sediments and packrat middens - collections of plants, insects, and vertebrate bones - Scott A. Elias describes how the increased precipitation and cooler temperatures of the Pleistocene affected the desert environment. He also traces the impact of ancient cultures on the landscape, from the earliest inhabitants to the Anasazi. Surveying the basic types of vertebrate, insect, and plant fossils and outlining dating methods as well as other field techniques, the book covers geology, climate, and paleoecology - the interactions among prehistoric plants and animals. For hikers, tourists, and amateur paleontologists, Elias opens a window onto the natural history of one of America's most dramatic regions.