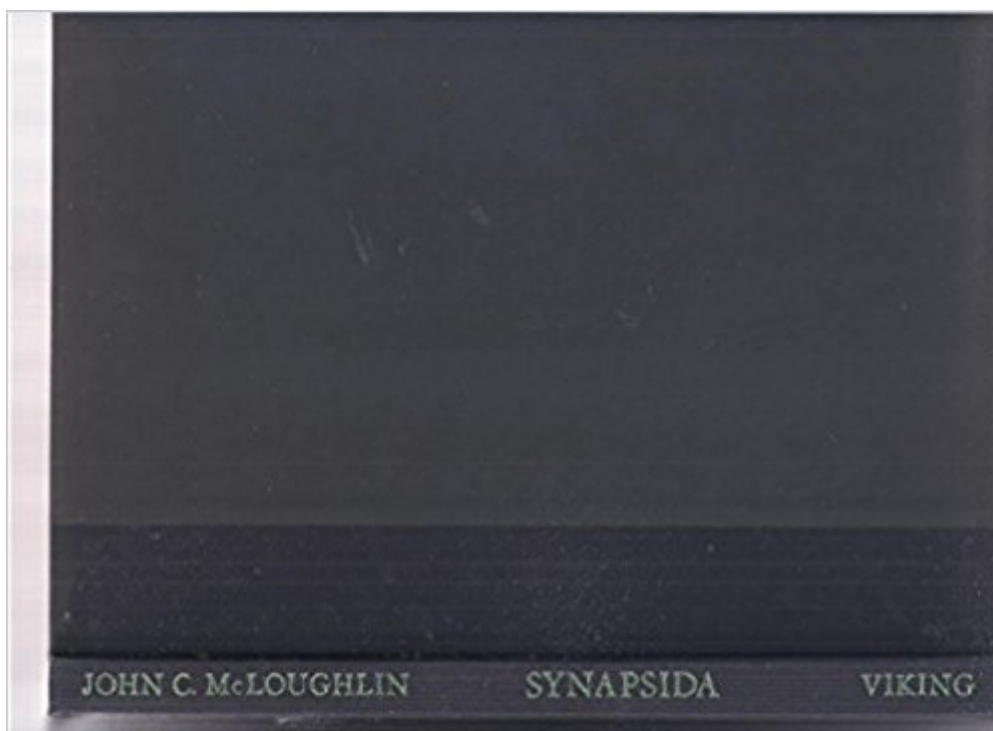


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# Synapsida



## Synopsis

The time is the Upper Permian-about 235 million years ago-and life is hard. A hippopotamus-sized tapinocephalid has been cornered by three predatory gorgonopsians. which in turn must defend themselves and their prey from the approaching anteosauricl. . . . All of these improbable beasts are synapsids. bizarre creatures that eventually gave rise to our own class, the mammals (whose humble ancestor hides in the foliage to the left) . These curious reptile like animals were evolution's first-and very successful-experiment with large-animal life on land. In fact, synapsids managed to rule the earth for almost 100 million years before they were finally displaced by the dinosaurs. In this lively and beautifully illustrated recreation of the rise and fall of the synapsid line, author/illustrator John C. McLoughlin explores the workings of ecology and evolution and, ultimately, the origins of the human mind itself.

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## Customer Reviews

The time is the Upper Permian-âabout 235 million years ago-âand life is hard. A hippopotamus-sized tapinocephalid has been cornered by three predatory gorgonopsians. which in turn must defend themselves and their prey from the approaching anteosauricl. . . . All of these improbable beasts are synapsids. bizarre creatures that eventually gave rise to our own class, the mammals (whose humble ancestor hides in the foliage to the left) . These curious reptile like animals were evolution's first-âand very successful-âexperiment with large-animal life on land. In fact, synapsids managed to rule the earth for almost 100 million years before they were finally displaced by the dinosaurs. In this

lively and beautifully illustrated recreation of the rise and fall of the synapsid line, author/illustrator John C. McLoughlin explores the workings of ecology and evolution and, ultimately, the origins of the human mind itself.

This is a superb book and I fell in love with it the first time I read it. I hadn't really gotten a handle on the split from Reptiles to Reptiles, proto-mammals and proto-dinosaurs/birds before I read this, but after reading it, I felt more confident. It reads like a lecture, with the kinds of asides and little jokes a good lecturer uses to keep the audience engaged. Like Feynman's *Physics* for physicists, or other works of his which are basically edited transcriptions. The drawings are clear and helpful, the best kind of just-the-facts pen and ink, with firm lines and light stippling suggesting tone. Among the excellent points raised and made using pictures and discussion, McLaughlin covers: Skull and jaw bone history (why do we have lizard jaw bones in our inner ears?) Tooth function and evolution and the muscles and bones that are needed to support them Pioneering by insects which provide ready meals for the vertebrates which followed them ashore and into the sky. Therapsid (proto-mammal) characteristics which allowed them (and descendant mammals) to survive the dinosaur ages, particularly thought based on indirect evidence, versus action based on immediate sensation and comprehension. This is one of the 40 or so top books on my list to give far Bat or Bar Mitzvahs and middle school / high school graduation. It's now timed out at a lot of libraries, and there's nothing that covers the same material as well. Not even David Norman's big illustrated Dinosaur book. This makes a great companion to Dr. Norman, or even Bakker's "The Hot Blooded Dinosaur". Or Horner's work, etc. Ruminations about thought, smell and staying ahead of keen eyed, big toothed Terrible Lizards also fits well with Loren Eisey's "The Immense Journey" or Walker and Shipman's "The Wisdom of the Bones". By comparison, Ward's "Gorgon" has some nice field stories and aims high, but McLaughlin has a bigger and firmer conceptual framework. He's clearer on what he's trying to say, and the ability to draw to show a point is invaluable. There are people hooked to who claim to have new or like=new copies of this book, now 31 years old. Buy it for the dinosaur fan, the student of evolution, natural science, the fan of illustrated technical books, anyone who enjoys a good general audience science lecture. It ought to STILL be in every school library. A light editorial polish would bring the text up to date. This is the best kind of science book- it is what it is because of the story it's trying to tell. It's worth your time and attention.

This book is excellent. It is a shame that it is out of print. It has great illustrations and it is about therapsids and synapsida everyone's favorite proto-mammals.

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