1. Record Nr. UNINA9910303444303321

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Titolo	Great Moments in the History of Life / / by George H. Shaw
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cham : , : Springer International Publishing : , : Imprint : Springer, , 2018
ISBN	3-319-99217-1
Edizione	[1st ed. 2018.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (93 pages)
Collana	Popular Science, , 2626-6113
Disciplina	574.09
Soggetti	Life sciences History Nature Environment Earth Geology Astrobiology Historical geology Popular Life Sciences History of Science Popular Science in Nature and Environment Popular Earth Science Historical Geology
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di contenuto	Introduction -- In the beginning…and somewhat later -- How to make a habitable planet -- Prebiotic chemical synthesis -- The origin of life -- Interlude -- Photosynthesis – the game changer -- The rise of oxygen and the origin of the eukaryotic cell -- Earliest plants and animals -- The Cambrian explosion and emergence of “modern” body plans -- The end of the Ordovician and the colonization of the land -- The Permian extinction and the rise of the dinosaurs -- End of Cretaceous extinction – the end of the dinosaurs -- The rise of mammals, the Genus Homo, and the ongoing extinction event -- Conclusion.

Sommario/riassunto

A non-technical (but serious) treatment of those parts of Earth history leading up to human history, as well as some pre-historical aspects of humanity. Many “events” in Earth’s history necessarily preceded the emergence of human beings (and intelligence). Geology has provided us with a great deal of information about these various steps on the way to intelligent life, and how and why they were important. Some of these events were on a cosmic scale (no universe – no life!), some were planetological/astronomical (no Earth – no life), some were essentially chemical (how did life emerge in the primordial ocean and why do we have oxygen in the atmosphere?), and some were details of evolutionary history (how did life colonize the land and how did mammals develop?). In this book an enthusiastic professor of geosciences presents a broad introduction from the Big Bang to the present and into the future, lucidly explaining aspects from various disciplines to interested, non-specialist readers.