

Kirk Richard Johnson
Chief Curator & Vice President of Research and Collections
Denver Museum of Nature & Science
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Experience:

Vice President of Research and Collections, Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 2006-present
Chief Curator, Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 2004-present
Chairman, Department of Earth Sciences, Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 2001-2006
Curator of Paleontology, Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 1991-2006.
Postdoctoral Researcher, University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1989-1990.

Education:

Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Geology and Paleobotany Ph. D., 1989.
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Geology and Paleobotany, M. S., 1985.
Amherst College, Massachusetts. Geology and Fine Art, A. B. *Magna cum Laude*, 1982.

Biographical Sketch:

Kirk Johnson studies fossil plants, terrestrial stratigraphy, geochronology and dinosaur extinction and works in a museum environment where good science and public communication of science are equally valued. He has published many popular and scientific articles on topics ranging from fossil plants and modern rainforests to the ecology of whales and walruses. He is best known for his research on fossil plants that is widely accepted as some of the most convincing support for the theory that an asteroid impact caused the extinction of the dinosaurs. Since 1997, he has supervised the *Denver Basin Project*, a multidisciplinary NSF-funded effort to understand and interpret the paleontology, geology, and hydrology of the rocks beneath Denver. This work has led to the discovery and analysis of a 64 million-year-old tropical rainforest in Colorado. His research has also taken him to Alaska's Bering Sea, the Brazilian Amazon, the Canadian High Arctic, the rainforests of New Zealand, the Gobi desert, India, China, Patagonia, and the American West. He is presently working on research projects in Patagonia, Manchuria, Wyoming, and Denver. Between 1990 and 1995, he led a team that planned, and built the Museum's award-winning exhibition *Prehistoric Journey* and he continues to design museum exhibits and other media to popularize Earth Sciences. Kirk loves to work closely with artists to create accurate paintings, murals, and dioramas of prehistoric landscapes. The *Ancient Denvers* series of 14 images can be seen at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and the *Ancient Colorado* series of ten paintings can be seen in the Colorado Convention Center. He is now involved in the initial stages of designing a new Hall of the Earth at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.

Publication summary

(281 publications including 67 research articles, 7 edited volumes, 5 popular books, 42 popular articles and 160 brief contributions (abstracts, book reviews, etc.)

Recent Popular books:

- Johnson, K. R and Troll, R., Oct. 2007, *Cruisin' the Fossil Freeway: An epoch tale of a scientist and an artist on the ultimate 5,000 mile paleo road trip*, Golden, Fulcrum Press, 204 p.
Johnson, K. R. and Bonnell, M. A., July 2007, *Gas Trees and Car Turds, A Kids' Guide to the Roots of Global Warming*. Fulcrum Press, Golden, Fulcrum Press, 38 p.
Johnson, K. R. and Stucky, R.K., 2006, *Prehistoric Journey: A History of Life on Earth*: Golden, Fulcrum Press, 144 p., second edition.
Johnson, K. R. and Reynolds, R., 2006, *Ancient Denvers: Scenes from the past 300 million years of the Colorado Front Range*: Golden, Fulcrum Press, 32 p., second edition.

Recent Scientific Publications:

- Nichols, D. J. and Johnson, K. R., 2008, *Plants and the K-T Boundary*. Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, K. R., 2007, Forests frozen in time. *Nature* v. 447, p. 786
- Iglesias, A., Wilf, P., Johnson, K. R., Zamuner, A. B., Cúneo, N. R., Matheos, S. D., Singer, B. D. 2007, A Paleocene lowland macroflora from Patagonia reveals significantly greater richness than North American analogs. *Geology* v. 35 no. 10, p. 947-950.
- Wilf, P., C.C. Labandeira, K.R. Johnson, B. Ellis, 2006, Decoupled plant and insect diversity after the End-Cretaceous extinction. *Science*, vol. 313, p. 1112-1115.
- 2005, Wilf, P., Johnson, K.R., Cuneo, N.R., Smith, M.E., Singer, B.S., and Gandolfo, M.A., Eocene plant diversity at Laguna del Hunco and Rio Pichileufu, Patagonia, Argentina: *The American Naturalist*, v. 165, no. 6, p. 634-650.
- Wilf, P., Labandeira, C.C., Johnson, K.R., and Cuneo, N.R., 2005, Richness of plant-insect associations in Eocene Patagonia: a legacy for South American biodiversity: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, v. 102, no. 25, p. 8944-8948.
- Wilf, P., and Johnson, K.R., 2004, Land plant extinction at the end of the Cretaceous: a quantitative analysis of the North Dakota megafloral record: *Paleobiology*, v. 30, no. 3, p. 347-368.
- Johnson, K. R. and Ellis, B., 2002, A tropical rainforest in Colorado 1.4 million years after the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary, *Science*, vol. 296, pp. 2379-2383.
- Hartman, J., Johnson, K. R., Nichols, D. J., eds., 2002, The Hell Creek Formation and the Cretaceous-Tertiary Boundary in the northern Great Plains: An integrated Continental record of the End of the Cretaceous: *Geological Society of America Special Paper* vol. 361, 520 p.

Awards:

- Distinguished Lecturer, American Association of Petroleum Geologists, 2007-2008.
- Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists Distinguished Public Service to Earth Sciences Award, 2002.
- Geological Society of America Fellow, 2002.
- Paleontological Society Distinguished Lecturer, 1999-2000.
- American Association of Museums Curator's Choice Award: Best museum exhibit in 1995 for the *Prehistoric Journey* exhibit, 1996.

Documentaries:

Appeared on more than 25 television shows about science, paleontology, rainforests, dinosaur extinction, and extinct landscapes including: *Prehistoric Megastorms* (History Channel, 2008), *Naked Science: The Rockies* (National Geographic Channel, 2007), *Naked Science: Birth of America* (National Geographic Channel, 2007), *Megadisasters* (The History Channel, 2006), *Discovering Denver* (Travel Channel, 2004), *And Then There Were None*, (Dinosaurs: Inside and Out, Discovery Channel, 1998), *Crater of Death* (BBC, 1997), *The Ultimate T-rex* (Discovery Channel, 1996), *The Doom of the Dinosaurs* (Discovery Channel, 1995), *Planet of Life* (NHK/Discovery Channel, 1996), *News For Kids* (Denver Channel 4, 1995), *The Quest for the Rose* (BBC, 1994), *Extinction Mysteries* (Paleoworld on the Learning Channel, 1994), *The Climate Puzzle* (The Weather Channel, 1993).

Museum Exhibits:

Served as curator or primary scientific consultant for more than 14 museum exhibits including: *Dinosaurs in their World* (Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 2006-2008), *Dinosaurs Alive* (American Museum of Natural History, 2005-2007), the new *Utah Fieldhouse of Natural History State Park and Museum* (2001-2004), *Ancient Denvers* (Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 2002), *Digging Up Denver* (Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 2001), *Shape of Roxborough*, (Roxborough State Park, 2000), *Colossal Fossil Vacation* (Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 1999), *Buried Landscapes* (Denver International Airport, 1998), *Prehistoric Journey* (Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 1995).