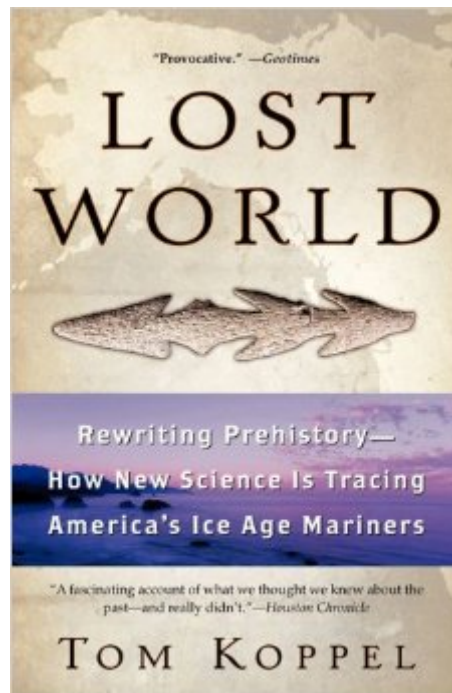


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Lost World: Rewriting Prehistory---How New Science Is Tracing



Synopsis

For decades the issue seemed moot. The first settlers, we were told, were big-game hunters who arrived from Asia at the end of the Ice Age some 12,000 years ago, crossing a land bridge at the Bering Strait and migrating south through an ice-free passage between two great glaciers blanketing the continent. But after years of sifting through data from diverse and surprising sources, the maverick scientists whose stories *Lost World* follows have found evidence to overthrow the "big-game hunter" scenario and reach a new and startling and controversial conclusion: The first people to arrive in North America did not come overland -- they came along the coast by water. In this groundbreaking book, award-winning journalist Tom Koppel details these provocative discoveries as he accompanies the archaeologists, geologists, biologists, and paleontologists on their intensive search. *Lost World* takes readers under the sea, into caves, and out to the remote offshore islands of Alaska, British Columbia, and California to present detailed and growing evidence for ancient coastal migration. By accompanying the key scientists on their intensive investigations, Koppel brings to life the quest for that Holy Grail of New World prehistory: the first peopling of the Americas.

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Customer Reviews

This is a narrative tale of how contemporary research is overturning long-held assumptions of how the Americas were first populated. It supports the new paradigm that the first Americans followed a coastal migration path from Asia, a path that has been largely submerged by the melting of the glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age. Part of the fascination of the book is its detailing of how scientists are trying to overcome the tremendous challenge of looking for artifacts that may be hundreds of feet under water, and succeeding. The other fascinating aspect is the demonstration of the all-too-human side of science: how egos and the competition for recognition can actually slow the discovery of new knowledge. This is where the story benefits from being told by a journalist - Koppel makes it sound like a suspenseful drama told in human terms. In comparison, as a lay reader I found archeologist Tom Dillehay's "Settlement of the Americas" too caught up in academic minutiae to be readable. Some reviewers have faulted the author for injecting too much personal commentary. Aside from an unfortunate lapse where he names an early relic hunter and then labels him a "blockhead", I personally felt that his narration improved the account by providing a layman's perspective on how dedicated and specialized these scientists are in their approach. An excellent, highly readable overview of the people and ideas that are changing our view of American prehistory.

This book quite effectively debunks the prevailing theories about the earliest arrival of humans in the Americas. According to that body of knowledge, late in the last ice age people from Asia walked across the Beringia land bridge, which was formed by lowered sea levels, into Alaska and then south through Canada via a supposed corridor between thousands of miles of glaciers. Here Tom Koppel shows that the evidence for that old paradigm is shaky and conjectural at best. Instead, in recent years evidence has grown showing that a few thousand years previously, the same lowered sea levels allowed seafaring peoples to colonize the Americas by hopping along islands and coastlines around the rim of the Northern Pacific. This phenomenon was previously unknown because the relevant coastal areas are now under water, since sea level rose again at the end of the ice age. Koppel presents both the latest scientific evidence of such coastal migrations of ancient peoples, and also offers plenty of firsthand reporting of the archeologists, anthropologists, and geologists who are doing groundbreaking work in the field, mostly along the coasts of British Columbia and Alaska. Koppel's writing is a bit repetitive and he has a hard time avoiding big speculations, while he can't quite convince the reader of the all-encompassing dominance of these new theories as much as he himself has been convinced. However, after reading this book you will have good reason to place credence in the increasingly compelling evidence of coastal migrations

by ancient Americans, and declare the predominant "ice corridor" thesis to be just a tired old paradigm that is in real danger of being overthrown. [~doomsdayer520~]

An avid, but often "challenged" reader of science, philosophy, and culture, I value clear writing above all things. Tom Koppel's explanations of radiocarbon dating, and of all the other methods of modern archaeology, were so step-by-step and lucid that even I, techno-dummy, understood them PAINLESSLY, without my customary cerebral seize-up. On top of that, without losing any accuracy or "rigor," Koppel weaves the story like a mystery writer, seasoning necessarily slower passages with hints at just-around-the-bend revelations. And he recaps just enough to keep us straight with the story, not enough to annoy. With documentary flair reminiscent of John McPhee's work, the guy gives the facts AND the color, always in historical perspective. I learned and enjoyed, which is all I ask of a book. Thus..... five stars.

Mr. Koppel is a skillful prose writer, but the facts, theories and evidence in his book are interspersed few and far between. This makes it easy and fun to read, but left me starving for the archeological meat and potatoes that I had bought the book for in the first place. So, to those who enjoy reading themselves to sleep to well-written travel narratives with stories of mild adventure, I do recommend "Lost World". But, those just interested in a fact-filled presentation of the "before Clovis, by boat" theory of the peopling of the Americas and its supporting evidences will likely be disappointed with this book. To them I recommend instead the book "Bones, Boats and Bison."

Tom Koppel's new book, *Lost World*, is a wonderful narrative but packed with treasures of information as well. It is his personal journey with very talented and resourceful archaeologists and their colleagues. At the same time it is a credible account of their discoveries, and sometimes disappointments. Setting the record right with respect to the western coastal settlement is only one of his accomplishments. Also he has performed a service that is beyond measure organizing into a single volume a myriad of important facts from diverse sources. Having read many of the scientific and scholarly works relating to this subject, I must state that none has been as interesting, unbiased, forthright, unembellished and evenhanded as has Tom Koppel's book. Louis C. Sheppard, Ph.D., D.I.C.

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