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### *The Geology of the Parks, Monuments, and Wildlands of Southern Utah* by Robert Fillmore

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## BOOK REVIEW

**The Geology of the Parks, Monuments, and Wild-lands of Southern Utah.** Robert Fillmore. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2000. \$19.95, paperback; 268 pages. ISBN 0-87480-652-6.

It is so easy to love the towering cliffs and red layered cakes of sandstone and siltstone of the Colorado Plateau. These formidable rock formations dissected by narrow slot canyons and vast gray plains are attractive to most people. Unless (or especially if), you have lost a cow in a slot, or a jeep in a flash flood-filled wash, or have only a few hours to cross them on the highway on a trip to less important destinations.

This is a good book for all those folks, and I particularly recommend it to novices and diletantes, like me, wishing to understand southern Utah geology. I have worked extensively in southern Utah on biological surveys and am always looking for ways to better understand the rocks and geologic history of the area. For these reasons I picked up this book and could hardly put it down until I had read every word.

The book is divided into 2 sections by the author, but I considered it to be divided into 3: basic principles of geology, a general tour through the geologic time periods, and a road log with specific examples of rock features along the principal highways of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and adjacent areas. I was especially pleased with the redundancy and parallel construction of these parts. These devices helped emphasize what I thought the author had chosen to be the most important messages concerning the area: the comparable stratigraphy across long distances (despite different type section names), the mountain-building events, the general and stupendous uplift of the plateau, and the inter-fingering of sediments during repetitive erosive and depositional series resulting from regressive and transgressive seas and rivers through time. These concepts finally hit home with me. I now better understand the sometimes confusing array of sediments encountered in the area. For the first time I understand why not all layers are spread uniformly across the Colorado Plateau!

Fillmore introduced the general principles clearly, followed by events of various time periods for the region as a whole (in a more global context), and then the road log gave specific examples of the phenomena in rock-hard, layers-in-your-face locations that should be easy to find on a road trip. I must admit, however, that I did not check any mileages for accuracy. That is something I will do during my next field season as I traverse the area.

The book was easy to read and combined technical knowledge with general information. The index worked well, and I used it repeatedly to check concepts handled earlier in my reading.

Inquisitive readers could access additional information by consulting references in the brief bibliography associated with each of the chapters covering a particular geologic time period. There was a sparse bibliography given in the road log section, and I was surprised that it did not include Hintze (1988, *A Field Guide to Utah's Rocks: Geologic History of Utah*) or Rigby (1976, *Northern Colorado Plateau: Field Guide*), both of which can be valuable companions to this work. As a biologist, I would have appreciated more information concerning the fossils of the area, but that is not a major fault as it would have increased the book's length. I will just need to go elsewhere.

As more and more people come to see the dissected, cake-like stratigraphy for which the Colorado Plateau is world famous, they will have additional choices in the interpretation that this book provides. This sturdy paperback will fit easily into most glove compartments of sports utility vehicles of tourists as well as the battered trucks of natural history professionals and ranchers crisscrossing the red rock country, looking for cows, avoiding floods, and moving on down the road.

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