

## **Book Review of *Oceans of Kansas: A Natural History of the Western Interior Sea***

by Roy Bird, Director, Kansas Center for the Book

*Oceans of Kansas: A Natural History of the Western Interior Sea*, by Michael J. Everhart. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005. \$39.95.

In the distant past, Kansas was far different. Beneath the surface of a deep water ocean, and in the skies above, sharks, mosasaurs, fishes, turtles and pteranodons waged devastating wars of survival. In each chapter of his new book, *Oceans of Kansas*, Kansas Center for the Book Fellow Mike Everhart, an expert on the Cretaceous Seas and Adjunct Curator of Paleontology at the Sternberg Museum of Natural History at Fort Hays State University, creates a fascinating scenario of what life in those ancient waters might have been like based on fossil evidence. Each chapter also includes a discussion of the earliest Kansas fossil discoveries and their discoverers. Finally, every chapter contains remarks about 21st century research and finds, some as recent as 2004.

The result is an eminently readable book about the almost unimaginable age of the past, in a friendly style and easily understood by lay readers and scholars alike. It is hard to believe that Kansas was ever a sea floor, but it is harder still to believe that this is Mike Everhart's first book. He writes like a veteran, and the book nearly sold out its first printing in the first three months after its publication.

*Oceans of Kansas* is thoroughly illustrated with photos and augmented with graphs, charts and maps. It features a dozen original color plates in its center by talented artist Dan Varner, who vividly depicts the monsters that inhabited those ancient waters. Mike Everhart presents the fascinating story of the way Kansas used to be *mya* (millions of years ago) and the scientists of yesteryear and today who explore the natural history of America's ancient inland ocean. This is a book for scholars and adult lay readers alike.