

**Survivors: The Animals and Plants that Time Has Left Behind**  
by Richard Fortey. Harper Press 2011.

Richard Fortey had an illustrious career as a palaeontologist at the Natural History Museum in London, from which he retired in 2006, and is a highly respected and prize-winning author, not least of *The Earth: An Intimate History and Trilobite!*

*Survivors*, his latest work, is about the creatures whose origins are prehistoric but which have survived into the world we inhabit. Sandwiched between a Prologue and Epilogue are ten chapters: Old Horseshoes; The Search for the Velvet Worm; Slimy Mounds; Life in Hot Water; An Inveterate Bunch; Greenery; Of Fishes and Hellbenders; Heat in the Blood; Islands, Ice; *Survivors Against the Odds*. Fortey writes with a mixture of scientific analysis and down-to-earth enthusiasm that makes for a powerful combination, and in case the chapter titles have left you confused I will clarify and tell you that the chapters are about: Horseshoe Crabs, a worm called *Peripatus*, Stromatolites, Bacteria, an invertebrate called *Lingula Anatina*, herbs of the genus *Huperzia*, Lungfish, birds called Tinamous, and the ferreret or Midwife Toad.

The added boon of each chapter is that consideration of one life form often leads the author to consider others, related by genus or geography, and into the mix is also thrown evocative descriptions of the places which Fortey visited to observe his chosen creatures. The final chapter, *Survivors Against the Odds*, considers in broader terms how some species have survived over many millions of years, barely changed and yet strongly adaptive to altering circumstances.

*Survivors* is not a piece of light reading, but it is well worth the extra concentration to be taken on a fascinating journey which serves as yet another reminder of the extraordinary complexity of the planet on which we live.

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