



Bretz's Flood: The Remarkable Story of a Rebel Geologist and the World's Greatest Flood

John Soennichsen

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The land between Idaho and the Cascade Mountains is characterized by gullies, coulees, and deserts--in geologic terms, it is a wholly unique place on the earth. Legendary geologist J Harlen Bretz, starting in the 1920s, was the first to explore the area. Bretz, a former science teacher at Franklin High School in Seattle and then a professor at the University of Washington and later the University of Chicago, eventually formed the theory that the land was scoured in a virtual instant by a massive flood. His original thinking was rewarded with various forms of public and academic humiliation. In the mid-twentieth century, his theory sounded a bit too much like the biblical flood, and the scientific world wanting nothing to do with that sort of idea. (Ironically, Bretz was an avowed atheist, so this was hardly his inspiration.) Bretz's Flood tells the dramatic story of this scientific maverick-how he came to study the region, his radical theory that a huge flood created it, and how the mainstream geologic community campaigned to derail him from pursuing an idea that satellite photos would confirm decades later.

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