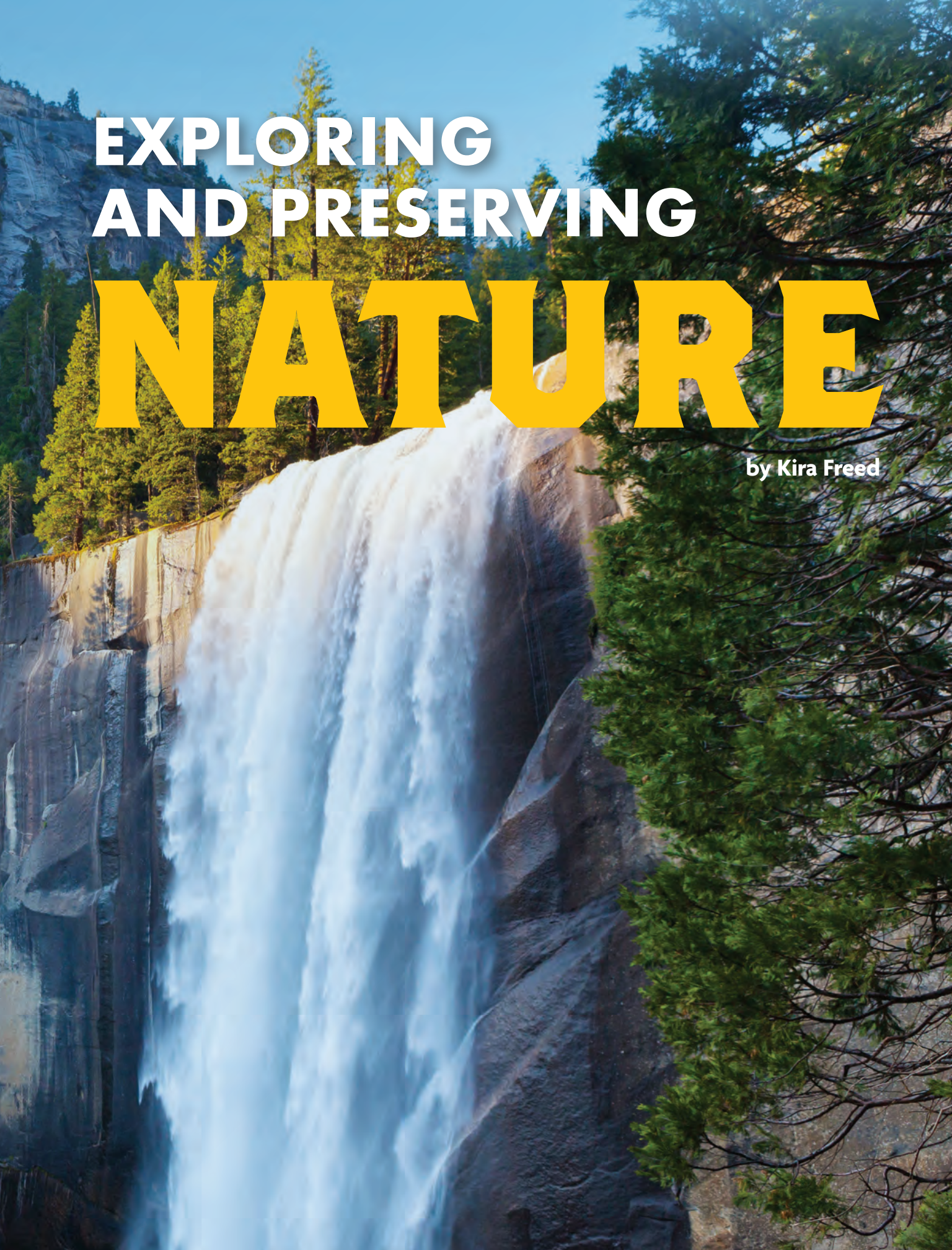


EXPLORING AND PRESERVING NATURE

by Kira Freed

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Dino Dream Come True 4

The Fight for Yosemite 12

Wildlife Corridors: Connecting the Dots 16

Glossary/Index 24

A DINO

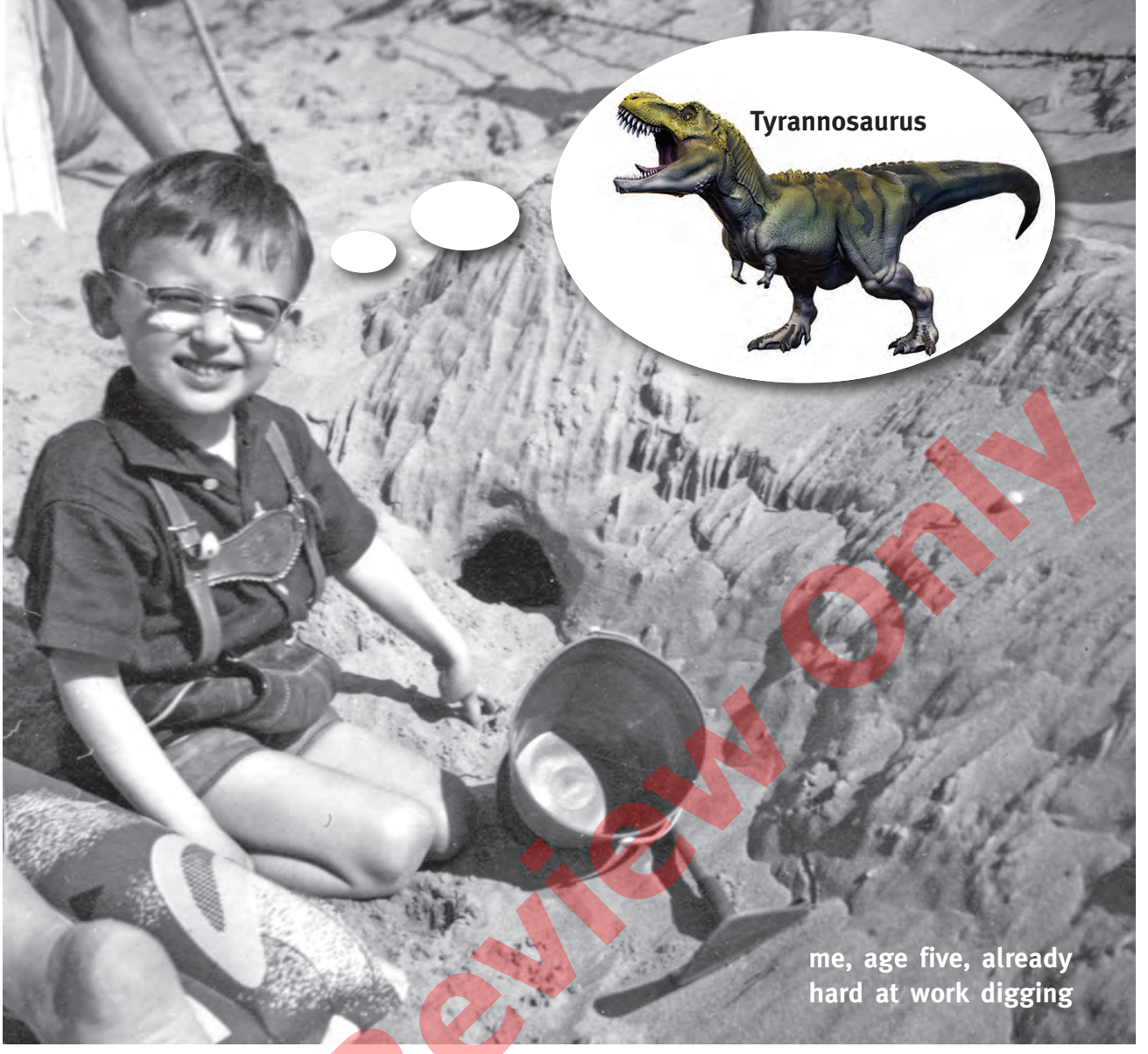
Dream Come True

as told by Hans Sues
to Kira Freed

This is the view from the balcony of the Dinosaur Hall at the National Museum of Natural History.

I've been fascinated by fossils since I was four years old, and now I work with them every day! My name is Hans Sues. I am a paleontologist at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. I have a special interest in dinosaurs and their relatives.

When I was four, my parents gave me a book on prehistoric life. I was fascinated by the idea that there were so many worlds full of strange creatures long before the time of humans. After that, I wanted to learn as much about these worlds as I could.



me, age five, already hard at work digging

I read many books and visited museums to see fossils. I also began to collect fossils when I started school.

As a child, I was interested in *Brachiosaurus*, the tallest dinosaur then known, and *Tyrannosaurus*, a huge, fierce meat eater. However, I loved *all* fossils, and I still do.

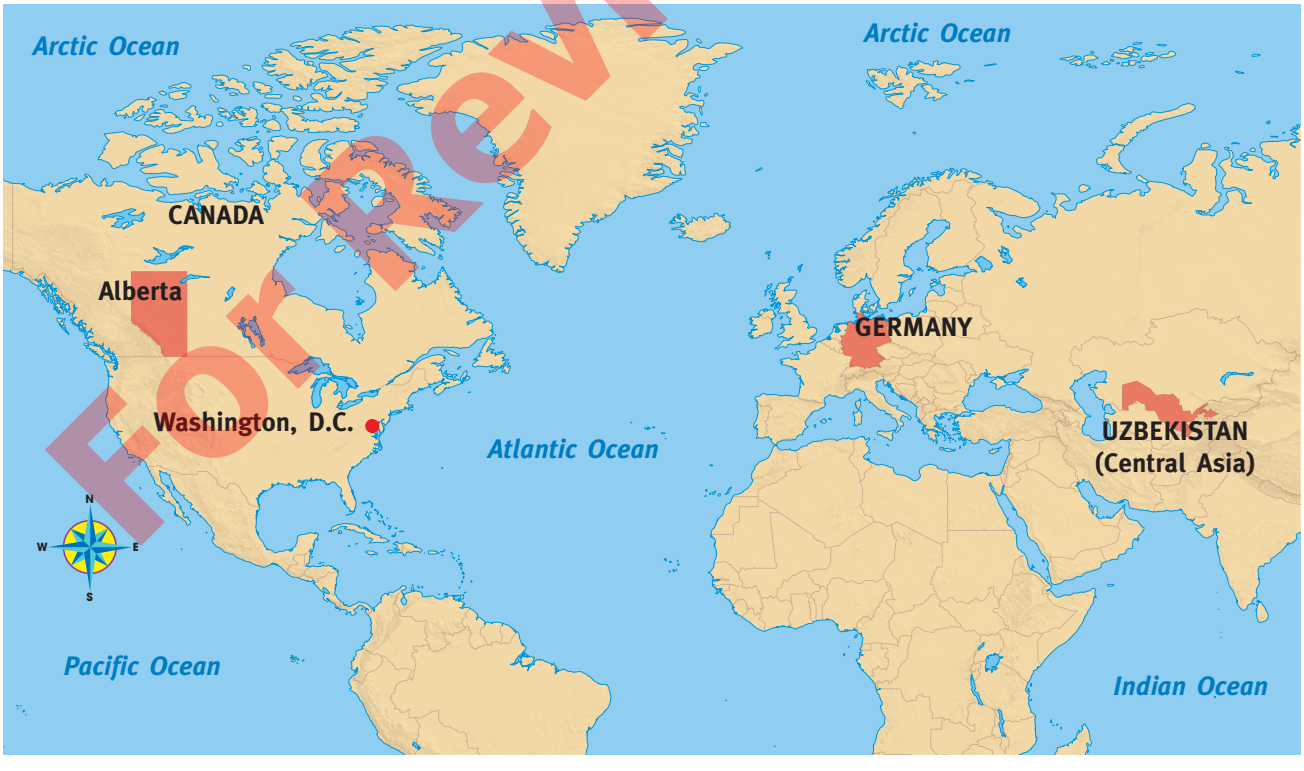
College Years

I grew up in Germany, a country in Europe. As a teenager, I traveled with other fossil collectors. Then I studied earth sciences and zoology in college in Germany. After that, I went to study in Canada at the University of Alberta. The day after I arrived,

I started working at a dinosaur site with a group of students and my professor. What an adventure!

For a city kid like me, being in out-of-the-way places is a thrill. It is wonderfully quiet. The air is clean. At night, you can see thousands of stars. You can see wild animals where they live. Once I saw the northern lights. Another time, I saw a bald eagle watching *me*.

▲ me, in 1989, splitting rock in search of fossils



▲ My work takes me around the world.

Of course, finding fossils is the most exciting part of a dig. Imagine being the first human to ever lay eyes on what is left of an animal or plant that lived millions of years ago!

AMPHIBIANS ▼

Discoveries

I received my master's and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard University. My favorite class was on the biology of amphibians and reptiles. Learning about these animals and their lives gave me good background knowledge for understanding dinosaurs and other ancient reptiles.

Over the years, I have found and named several new kinds of dinosaurs. I've also found and named many other extinct animals. Each discovery helps scientists understand how groups of animals changed, or evolved, over time. It also helps us learn why these animals became extinct.

◀ **Studying amphibians and reptiles helped me understand dinosaurs.**

REPTILES ▶

In 1997, I was co-leader of an expedition that camped in the desert in Central Asia. We were collecting fossils from 90 million years ago.

▲ If you are very neat and clean, you should not collect fossils. It's a dusty, dirty business!

One of my finds has never been identified. I was digging in some rocks 230 million years old. I found some reptile teeth that had strange grooves on them. When I saw the first tooth, it reminded me of the teeth of venomous snakes. However, unlike snake teeth, this tooth had grooves on both sides. Closer study showed that the grooves were for injecting venom. They are by far the oldest such reptile teeth ever found. So far we only have the teeth of this creature. We need more clues before we can identify it. I would love to find its bones!