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Eggs & Aliens in Bisti Badlands : New Mexico

#Thread

Bisti Badlands in New Mexico look more like a dreamscape or Alienland than a landscape. Resting beneath them sit what only can be described as giant cracked eggs, as if Mother Nature was cooking breakfast only to accidentally

drop a carton onto the desert's sandy floor and abandon the shattered shells.

How did a bunch of giant eggs get to this desolate area? The true story starts 73 million years ago.

At one time, this 45,000-acre of desert called the Bisti Badlands was completely submerged by a sea

called the Western Interior Seaway during the Cretaceous Period. As the water receded, layers of sandstone, mudstone, shale and other sedimentary rocks were revealed, creating the Kirtland Formation, only to be carved out by braided streams that flowed through the landscape.

The result is today's dry, eerie badlands.

"Over time, erosion of the soft mudstone weathered away leaving behind channel deposits [that formed into the shape of eggs and hoodoos]," Paleontologists explains that the eggs get their colorful, speckled appearance due to mineral

deposits in the stream that cut through the sedimentary rock. "The eggs' cracks are the result of differential weathering—mudstone weathers faster than other sediments, causing the formations to crack."

The giant egg formations, which range from five to six-and-a-half feet long, aren't the only reason to make a three-hour pilgrimage from Albuquerque. A petrified forest of juniper and other conifers makes the badlands even more post-apocalyptic.

And then there are the dinosaurs. Fossils—including dinosaur bones—have been found in the badlands, too.

Don't jump to conclusions—though the huge eggs look like prehistoric creatures could have left them behind, their origins are entirely geological.

And the eggs aren't the area's only Easter-like treat: Bisti Badlands also boasts pastel-painted sunsets. If you catch them at the right time, you'll see the bright yellow sun drop behind the landscape like an egg yolk into a bowl.