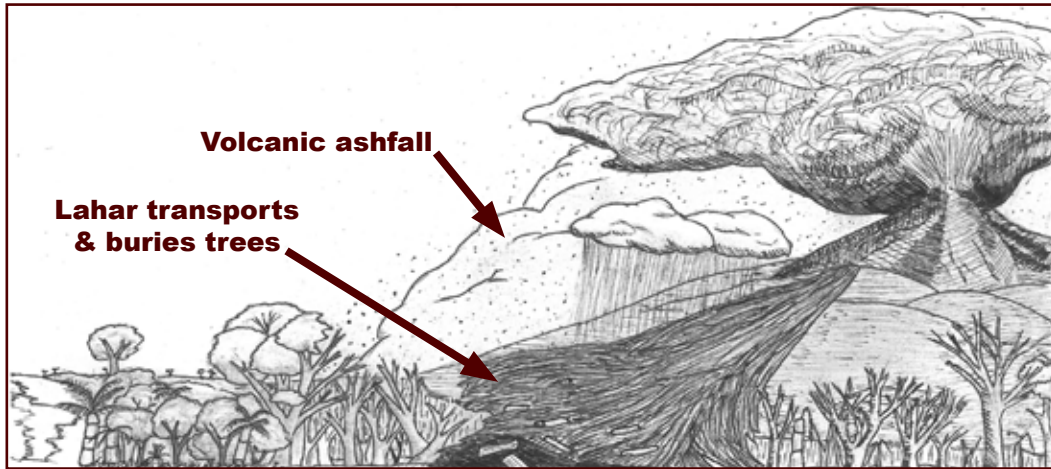


Sexi Through Time

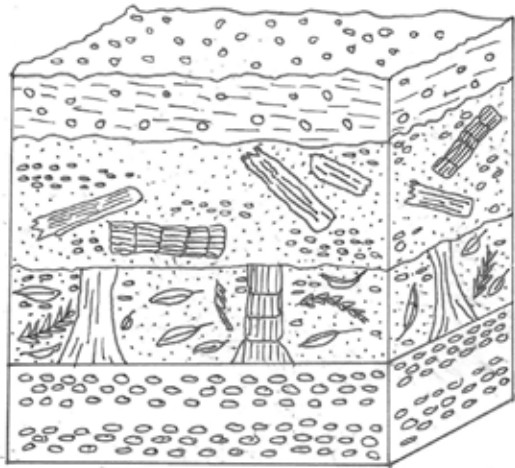
Home

Preservation of the Fossil Forest



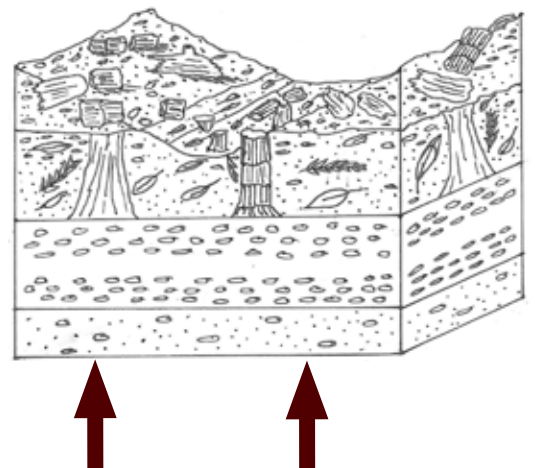
A volcanic eruption occurred near Sexi during the Eocene epoch 39 million years ago. As ash was erupted from the volcano and fell over the tropical forest, it stripped leaves from the trees below. Some ash formed small round rocks, or "lapilli," during a rainstorm. Soon after the ash and lapilli first reached the forest floor, a slurry of volcanic debris, a "lahar," moved downslope and buried the forest.

Burial & Fossilization



The fossil forest at Sexi first became known to science during the 1990s. Once scientists examined the fossil woods and leaves, it became apparent that the ancient low-lying tropical forest buried by the volcano was very different from the evergreen trees and shrubs that cover the hills near Sexi today.

Erosion & Uplift



Sexi Today

Wood and leaves remained encased in the layers of volcanic rocks for millions of years, slowly fossilizing over time. Movement of Earth's plates later uplifted the buried forest to its present elevation as the Andes Mountains formed. Rain and wind eroded the rocks encasing the forest, exposing the fossil woods and leaves at the Earth's surface.

