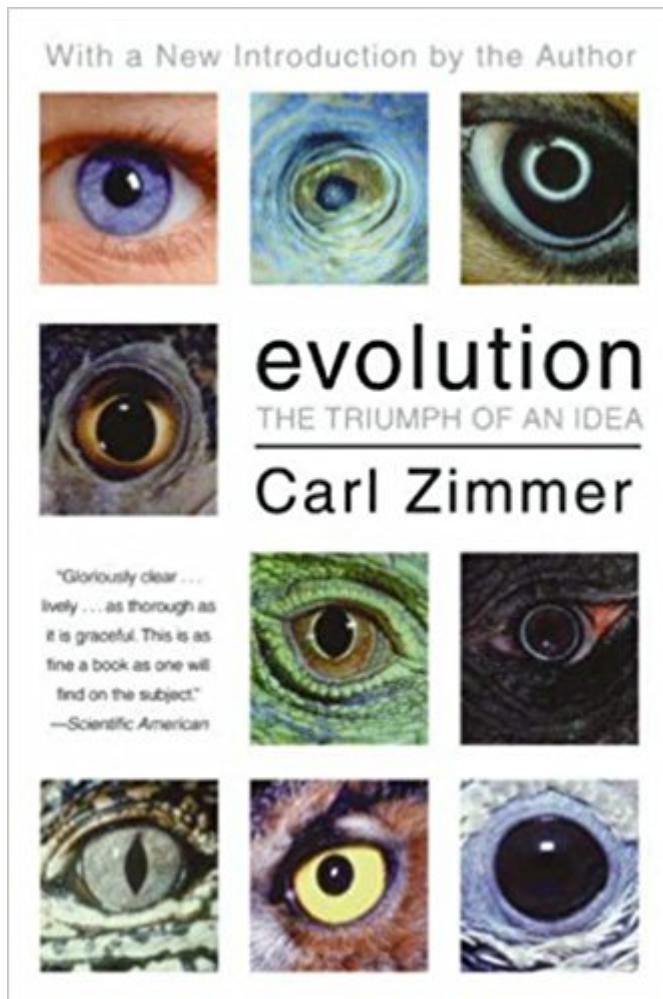


The book was found

Evolution: The Triumph Of An Idea



Synopsis

This remarkable book presents a rich and up-to-date view of evolution that explores the far-reaching implications of Darwin's theory and emphasizes the power, significance, and relevance of evolution to our lives today. After all, we ourselves are the product of evolution, and we can tackle many of our gravest challenges — from lethal resurgence of antibiotic-resistant diseases to the wave of extinctions that looms before us — with a sound understanding of the science.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Some books deserve more than five stars. Although to say this is a topic, in this particular case it is an act of justice. I have read several books about evolution by R. Dawkins, Matt Ridley, D. Dennett, and some others that are long to mention. So the basic idea here has nothing to do with how many books have you read about evolution but why this is different. And Carl Zimmer's Evolution, is different because of the quantity of issues and data that he embraces and the quality of the analysis

that he draws from them. You don't have to grapple with the topics asking yourself what do they mean: Zimmer does it for you with elegance and clarity, aspects that don't fit well all of the time. That's because he doesn't want to convince you about evolution, he wants to give you instead a pondered account of what happens around us and how the theory explains what we see. The theory is beautiful, but you will discover this by yourself as long as you let yourself be led by Zimmer's narration. To me at least, this is a big difference with other authors. Here, you won't find ideology but science in state of purity. I mean, facts, order, tests, proofs, predictions, and so on and on. The best indication that of what I'm saying is true is the last chapter, "What about God?" Here, Zimmer deploys his skill as a writer and as a science divulgator, by giving you a lesson about how to talk about hot topics without being burnt, which means without offending and, at the same time, without betraying the wonderful lessons of the book. In sum, 400-odd pages full of data, insight and delicate equilibrium.

The title of the book being reviewed is "Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea" and the author is Carl Zimmer. The author has done a great job covering such an immense topic in only 423 pages. He has also done a very effective job of researching this fast-advancing field and presenting the material in a compelling manner. The only area I found hard to focus on was his treatment of DNA as it applies to evolution. Some of the other book reviewers made the same comment. I thought the DNA topic needed diagrams and illustrations to make it clearer. I didn't find a single visual aid in the entire book. So imagine my surprise when some reviewers claimed the book was generously filled with illustrations. They had the hardcover version and I had the paperback version. Did I get short-changed? Zimmer made the biographical section of the book on Charles Darwin interesting because we see him as a human being, like us, full of flaws and doubts. A young person searching for a career that fulfills him. His medical career was short-lived because he hated the sight of blood. His career as a minister was even shorter lived. His real calling was as a natural scientist and he may be the greatest of them all. His lifelong contribution to the field is both highly important and huge. Biological science today is fundamentally based on his teachings. Zimmer certainly drives home the concept that life is a never-ending struggle for survival. If you are a newcomer to evolutionary theory, you will be well-schooled in it by the time you finish this book. I cannot imagine a topic more fascinating to learn. The fundamental theme of Darwinian evolution is that traits that help you survive get passed on to your offspring and traits that shorten your time on Earth become irrelevant. Over many, many generations, your species gets better at what it does to survive. However, like the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland, you have to run just to stay in one place.

Those who would do you harm are also getting better at what they do too. We may develop an effective pesticide to keep the insects from eating our crops, but in a few generations those insects will have evolved a species resistant to that pesticide. Similarly with antibiotics: Diseases that we thought we had eradicated, like tuberculosis and gonorrhea, are back stronger than ever. If you have trouble understanding how that can be possible, read this book. Another section of the book recounts the decades long battle between creationists and evolutionists. Recall the Scopes Monkey Trial in the 1920's where some states forbid the teaching of evolution in public schools. The battle continues to this day, now under the so-called science of intelligent design. It is not a science but is merely creationism by another name. These advocates work feverishly to undermine the teaching of true biological science in the schools. Ralph D. Hermansen, August 3, 2014

Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea by Carl ZimmerA thorough, well researched book that is broken out into four parts: Part One - Slow Victory: Darwin and the Rise of Darwinism, Part Two - Creation and Destruction, Part Three - Evolution's Dance, and Part Four - Humanity's Place in Evolution and: Evolution's Place In Humanity.

Positives:

1. Accessible, well written book with an extensive bibliography.
2. Provides a lot more historical references than any other book I have read on the topic. It includes an excellent biography on the life of Darwin and how he came about the theory of evolution and his personal struggles to disclose his findings to the public.
3. Interesting history on the physics of how we determined the antiquity of Earth. Not to mention the order in which new life-forms appeared on Earth, and their actual dates in history.
4. A lot of interesting information regarding evolution: "A population of birds can evolve into its own species if it gets cut off from its neighbors". You will find out why.
5. The historical impact of germs...Napoleon found out the hard way.
6. Nothing like mutations to get evolution going. The genetic tool kit is explained in detail.
7. The origin of whales is one of the most interesting examples of evolution. And BTW a whale is no more a fish than a bat is a bird.
8. Everything you wanted to know about extinction and then some.
9. Interesting topics of the arms race between man versus bug, disease (great stuff on AIDS) and the evolution of sex.
10. My favorite chapters have to do with human evolution. Fascinating stuff and worth the price of the book (Kindle). Plenty of monkey business. It's the kind of stuff I go ape over.

Negatives:

1. Less technical than other books on this topic.
2. The advancements of science is such that it is outdated in certain parts: genetics, and major recent findings (Tiktaalik comes to mind). That's what I get for waiting for the Kindle version.
3. It's an investment of time, a lot is covered.
4. Too politically correct if you ask me. Let loose a little Mr. Zimmer.

In summary, a solid book on evolution that focuses on the history of the idea and how it succeeds to this day. I'm in awe

of Darwin, science owes so much to his theory. Entire scientific fields are only possible with the understanding of evolution. Recommendations: "Why Evolution is True" by Jerry Coyne, "The Greatest Show On Earth" by Richard Dawkins, "Your Inner Fish" by Neil B. Shubin, "What Evolution Is" by Ernst Mayr and "The Making of the Fittest" by Sean B. Carroll.

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