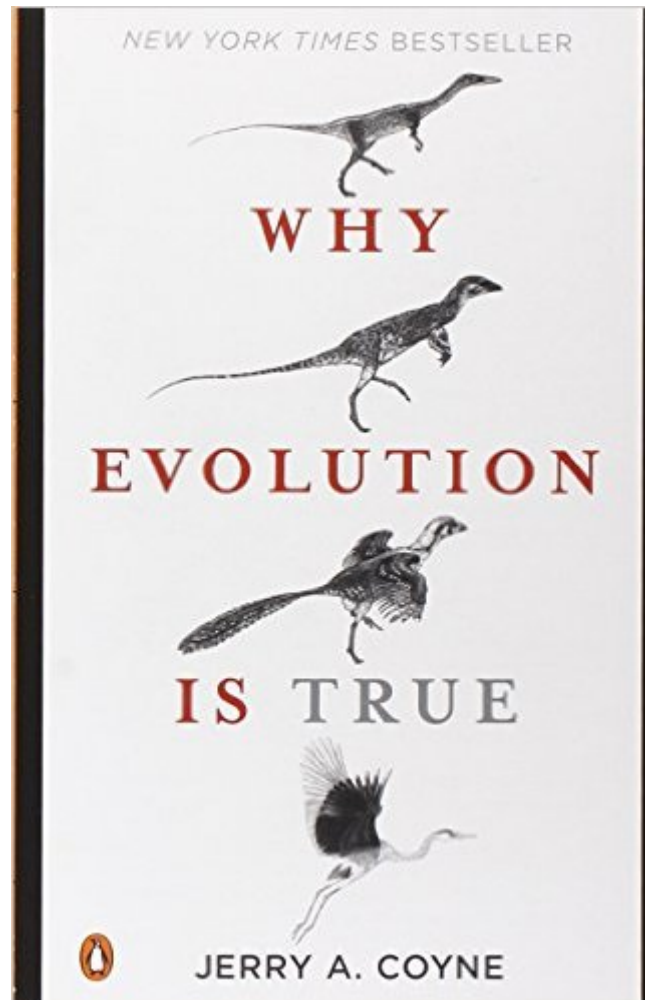


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Why Evolution Is True



Synopsis

"Coyne's knowledge of evolutionary biology is prodigious, his deployment of it as masterful as his touch is light." -Richard Dawkins In the current debate about creationism and intelligent design, there is an element of the controversy that is rarely mentioned-the evidence. Yet the proof of evolution by natural selection is vast, varied, and magnificent. In this succinct and accessible summary of the facts supporting the theory of natural selection, Jerry A. Coyne dispels common misunderstandings and fears about evolution and clearly confirms the scientific truth that supports this amazing process of change. Weaving together the many threads of modern work in genetics, paleontology, geology, molecular biology, and anatomy that demonstrate the "indelible stamp" of the processes first proposed by Darwin, *Why Evolution Is True* does not aim to prove creationism wrong. Rather, by using irrefutable evidence, it sets out to prove evolution right.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was raised in a very conservative Christian environment and taught Young-Earth Creationism (anti-evolution, anti-Big Bang, etc.). I bought into it for a long time. In college, I finally began to investigate some of the claims for myself---reading what was really being said by "the other side", rather than what I was being told was being said. The disparity I discovered can hardly be exaggerated: what I had been taught bore essentially zero resemblance to the real thing. Genuine evolutionary theory was virtually unrecognizable in the creationists' caricatures of it. I learned that I had been lied to---intentionally, or not, I do not know---and that the quantity, diversity, and quality of evidence in support of evolution was simply crushing. It wasn't just that it could not be ignored or dismissed as trivial; it was that it was so cohesive and mutually supportive and overwhelmingly

convincing that it simply HAD to be accepted as true. (As Gould said, it would be "perverse to withhold provisional assent.") This discovery sparked a long (and ongoing) journey of reading books on the topic of evolution---books by authors such as Stephen Jay Gould, Sean Carroll, Richard Dawkins, Charles Darwin, Neil Shubin, and others. I was enthralled with the elegant simplicity and beauty and sheer explanatory power of the ideas I was learning. They not only made sense, but had tremendous evidentiary support in nature and the lab (as well as mathematical modeling, game theory, use in other disciplines, etc.). But, as my journey progressed, and I continued to absorb ever more information and improve my understanding, I began to realize something. As I interfaced with many of those from my upbringing (i.e.

This is the best book on the evidence for evolution I have read. I wish I would have read it years ago. I went to a Young Earth Creationist (YEC) teaching high school and have attended very conservative, Genesis-is-literal churches my whole life. I attended required YEC conferences by Kent Hovind and another by Ken Ham in my High School science classes, and heard John Morris and Duane Gish speak several times in my church. Several years ago I decided to read a book on evolution because I couldn't understand why anyone would believe it. So I read "Why Darwin Matters" by Michael Shermer (also a very good book) and then started reading all the books I could find on evolution. The subject is fascinating and I have a new love for science and nature as a result of understanding how evolution works. "Why Evolution is True" is the best book I have read and I will recommend it to any young or old earth creationist, or intelligent design proponent, I meet. The explanation of the dating techniques of superposition, radiometric, and coral dating was very straightforward. Wells' experiment with radiometric dating and comparing the dates to the daily and yearly growth rings of coral was one of the best and most straightforward evidences I have read for an old earth. The book looks at all the important fossils, especially tracing the development of whales, discussing *Haikouella lanceolata* being the earliest chordate, and explains Tiktaalik roseae well. The fossils in the human lineage are also explained in excellent detail. The genetic portion of evolution books is always the most interesting evidence for evolution, in my opinion, and "Why Evolution is True" was no exception.

Jerry Coyne is a bit annoyed that it was necessary to write this book. I am glad he got annoyed enough to write it. In part he is writing against the intelligent design movement, and against creationism and he shows the flaws in these viewpoints not with rhetoric, but with well chosen evidence. The book is a powerful and straightforward account of evolution showing the strength of

the theory, its ability to make predictions, and giving many examples of the evidence on which evolution is based. After reading the book you have a good idea of what evolution is about, and what fields of study it applies in. Coyne is clear that evolution is a theory in biology of great explanatory power. The key idea is that of descent with modification. He is also clear (in his final chapter evolution redux) of the limits to evolutionary thinking. Good scientists know what they know, and also have some idea where their knowledge stops. Coyne demonstrates this ability well. By doing this he becomes a far better advocate for evolution than Dawkins. Evolution is not an ontological or moral theory. You can derive no moral lesson from evolution- it just is (p253). David Hume pointed out that deriving an ought from an is is usually to make a specious argument. The fact that the idea of evolution as progress has been misused by many is not an argument against evolution. It is an argument against the misuse of ideas. Coyne (p248) describes that, "There is an increasing (and disturbing) tendency of psychologists, biologists and philosophers to Darwinize every aspect of human behaviour, turning its study into a scientific parlour game.

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