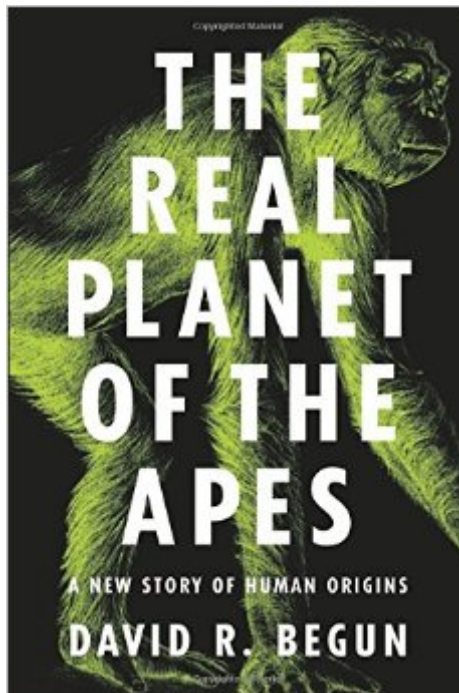


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The Real Planet Of The Apes: A New Story Of Human Origins



Synopsis

Was Darwin wrong when he traced our origins to Africa? *The Real Planet of the Apes* makes the explosive claim that it was in Europe, not Africa, where apes evolved the most important hallmarks of our human lineage--such as dexterous hands and larger brains. In this compelling and accessible book, David Begun, one of the world's leading paleoanthropologists, transports readers to an epoch in the remote past when the Earth was home to many migratory populations of ape species. Drawing on the latest astonishing discoveries in the fossil record as well as his own experiences conducting field expeditions across Europe and Asia, Begun provides a sweeping evolutionary history of great apes and humans. He tells the story of how one of the earliest members of our evolutionary group--a new kind of primate called *Proconsul*--evolved from lemur-like monkeys in the primeval forests of Africa. Begun vividly describes how, over the next 10 million years, these hominoids expanded into Europe and Asia and evolved climbing and hanging adaptations, longer maturation times, and larger brains, setting the stage for the emergence of humans. As the climate deteriorated in Europe around 10 million years ago, these apes either died out or migrated south, reinvading the African continent and giving rise to the lineages of the gorilla, chimpanzee, and, ultimately, the human. Presenting startling new insights about our fossil ape ancestors, *The Real Planet of the Apes* is a book that fundamentally alters our understanding of human origins.

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Customer Reviews

Do we know our anthropus from our pithecus? If not, we will find this a very helpful book. But why

should we be interested in either? We do not, unless we are interested in knowing how we humans evolved. But I dare say even if one has not such interest, this book is impossible to put down once we start on it. The period under study is the Miocene Age, which was the period about 7 to 23 million years ago. Prof Begun writes like a detective novelist with an intimate knowledge of CSI (Crime Scene Investigation). Indeed, palaeontology is very much like CSI. The principal work is finding fossils – and that is like looking for a needle in a haystack. After a fossil has been found, it has to be studied and analysed to ascertain when it lived. To do this, the palaeontologist has to understand geography and rock formations. This book gives a lucid account of the numerous fossils of ancient ape-like animals from Europe to Africa to Asia. It explains the differences between gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans, and humans; and that all have common DNA although we have more DNA in common with the chimpanzees than we do with gorillas and orangutans (which seemed a step removed from both the chimpanzee and the gorilla). Prof Begun's study of the dental records of the fossils is intriguing. It covers the fascinating study of the diet of the ancestors, and how the jaws and teeth provide clues as to the type and age of the ancestor. Prof Begun also explains why the human baby is born with a less developed brain than the primates. It is because the human child is born earlier (before his skull gets too big) than that of the apes. Hence, the human child is virtually helpless by itself for at least a year.

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