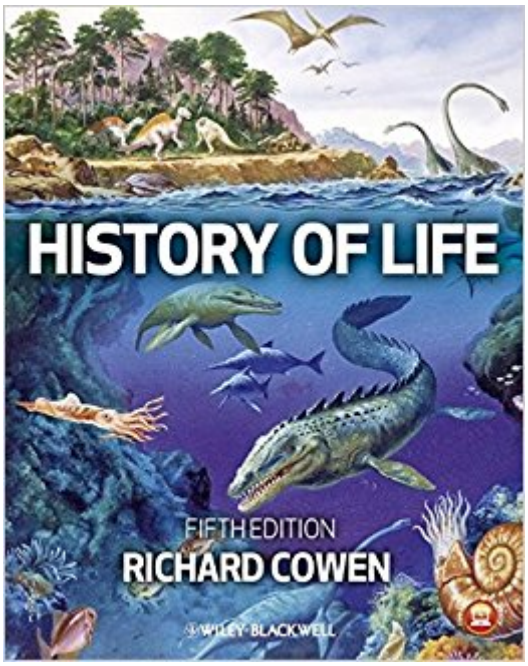
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History Of Life



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Synopsis

This text is designed for students and anyone else with an interest in the history of life on our planet. The author describes the biological evolution of EarthÃ¢â ¬â„¢s organisms, and reconstructs their adaptations to the life they led, and the ecology and environment in which they functioned. On the grand scale, Earth is a constantly changing planet, continually presenting organisms with challenges. Changing geography, climate, atmosphere, oceanic and land environments set a stage in which organisms interact with their environments and one another, with evolutionary change an inevitable result. The organisms themselves in turn can change global environments: oxygen in our atmosphere is all produced by photosynthesis, for example. The interplay between a changing Earth and its evolving organisms is the underlying theme of the book. Ã Â The book has a dedicated website which explores additional enriching information and discussion, and provides or points to the art for the book and many other images useful for teaching. See: www.wiley.com/go/cowen/historyoflife.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“Though biogeographical patterns take a backseat to the grand narrative of descent, as an entryÃ¢â ¬Â•level textbook this is hard to surpass.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â (Frontiers of biogeography, 5 February 2013)

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Although this is really for college students, it's written in such a way that the scientifically literate layman won't have any trouble with it, it is written so systematically, and even though I've been reading about this subject all my life, I'm finding it absolutely fascinating, compelling in fact. I can hardly put it down. But it's a long work, and after working on it for a couple weeks, I'm still only half way through it. But it's fun reading it. It's a large book (although only a couple hundred + pages), double column that looks like a 10 point font, with lots of beautiful color photographs and drawings. The writing style has a personal tinge to it, with touches of humor, which is somewhat surprising, but not unwelcome in such a formal book as this. You get the feeling that the author is talking to you personally. The author is also not shy about pointing out the difficulty of interpreting the evidence, especially the further back in time you go, and often points out areas of controversy and unsettled questions. Since this is the fifth edition, it would probably "pay" to read all future editions as well, since there doesn't seem to be any end to researchers filling out more and more details.

Clearly presented review of the current consensus on the History of Life. Don't get this one if you want to hear about any controversial theories, which I suppose is actually good for an entry level text book. When he has to make a choice between conflicting points of view, he mentions it briefly so you can follow up if you like. He briefly discusses eukaryote hybridization without attribution to Margulis -- perhaps this is no longer controversial? I don't remember any mention of major players in the development of the consensus with the exception of Darwin himself. I think it might be better to name a few more of the key players briefly -- maybe they are mentioned in the notes or extensive additional reading suggestions, which I skipped.It's a very clear book with appropriate illustrations

(both drawings and photos) which I found a pleasure to read as a layperson. As another reviewer mentioned, the book is highly anthropocentric, with fully 2/3 of the chapters related to chordates. As the other reviewer said, this is more or less to be expected. It does seem a shame that more attention isn't paid to the groups that by far outnumber animals with backbones in both absolute count and species diversity.However, even with the anthropocentric focus, Cowen's almost religious misanthropy became jarring towards the end of the book. The last several chapters document at depth our ancestors' killing all the poor neanderthals (with bigger brains that us, too!) and other Homo species and killing all the poor huge and cuddly giant sloths and other cute animals. I'm sure he would be the first to be outraged if an author slipped quotations from the Bible in a science text book, yet we are treated to this as the penultimate paragraph:"But the greater tragedy would be our legacy, because weÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ll destroy much of the worldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life along with ourselves. I believe that any rational God would have intervened long ago to prevent the wholesale destruction of so many of His creatures. We have only ourselves and one another to blame and to rely on."Religious views have no place in a science text book.

I think history of life is an excellent book. It reads faster than I thought it would.The student with limited science experience will find it interesting. A student with a deep background in science will find it amazing. If it matters, I am our high school science teacher. I also have several hundred fossils on display at a natural history Museum.

This outstanding text includes many new results with fine graphics. It is very readable, and it gives excellent descriptions of key adaptations as new species evolved.

I think of myself as an educated amateur and I am impressed that one person could generate such an interesting, comprehensive, and authoritative book, although I did notice some editorial mistakes that shouldn't have survived to the fifth edition (switched photos, etc.). I might fault the book for being a little vertebrate centric and anthropocentric, but that's to be understood. Now if only there were such a readable and comprehensive book dealing more expansively with pre-tetrapod life.

Thank you. One of my most favorite books. I'm almost done reading it already.

Good Article A++

This book is awesome. Took a Geology history of Life fossils course which I thought would be boring. I literally memorized everything in this book because of the pictures. The older version may cost less but you will not study as well compared to this.

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