

The Story of Evolution in 25 Discoveries: The Evidence and the People Who Found It

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Columbia University Press (Dec 22, 2020)

Hardcover \$35.00 (384pp)

978-0-231-19036-7

Much of science and the study of nature in the years before Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 came down to an effort to understand the mind of God. Through that lens, wildflowers and birdsong were viewed as evidence of God's love for humankind—why else would they exist, except to make our lives on Earth that much more enjoyable? But Darwin and other critical thinkers chipped away at biblical mainstays like Noah's animal-filled ark and minds began to change, albeit slowly. Even today, evolution has its doubters who shout for missing links and question the concrete evidence showing that birds and reptiles are closely related.

A large part of the problem for skeptics is how difficult it is to comprehend time in increments of millions and billions of years, something that geologists and evolutionary scientists do routinely. But a keen understanding of time is of the essence in order to get from the Earth-forming 4.5 billion years ago to the first inklings of life to a young Englishman voyaging around the world on the HMS *Beagle* gathering evidence for his revolutionary ideas: "There is grandeur in this view of life ... from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

With *The Story of Evolution in 25 Discoveries*, Donald Prothero provides a masterful, lively primer on the abundant evidence for evolution, including the latest fossil findings at digging sites and laboratories around the world—all furthering to close this case, once and for all.

MATT SUTHERLAND (November / December 2020)

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