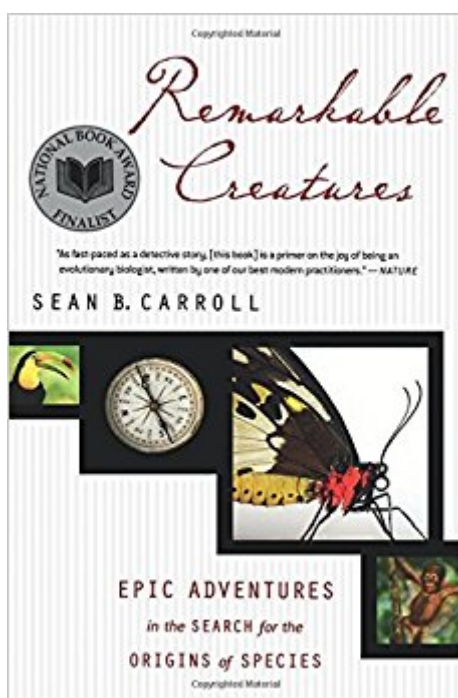


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# Remarkable Creatures: Epic Adventures In The Search For The Origins Of Species



## Synopsis

An award-winning biologist takes us on the dramatic expeditions that unearthed the history of life on our planet. Just 150 years ago, most of our world was an unexplored wilderness. Our sense of its age was vague and vastly off the mark, and much of the knowledge of our own species' history was a set of fantastic myths and fairy tales. In the tradition of *The Microbe Hunters* and *Gods, Graves, and Scholars*, Sean Carroll leads a rousing voyage that recounts the most important discoveries in two centuries of natural history: from Darwin's trip around the world to Charles Walcott's discovery of pre-Cambrian life in the Grand Canyon; from Louis and Mary Leakey's investigation of our deepest past in East Africa to the trailblazers in modern laboratories who have located a time clock in our DNA.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's unclear whether the title refers to the daring naturalist/explorers Carroll depicts or the creatures whose remains they found. In this thoroughly enjoyable book, Carroll (*Endless Forms Most Beautiful*), a molecular biologist at the University of Wisconsin, provides vignettes of some of the fascinating people who have made the most significant discoveries in evolutionary biology. He starts with some of the experiences and insights of great explorers like Alexander von Humboldt, Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace and Henry Walter Bates, then turns his attention to paleontologists who searched for the fossil evidence to support the new theory of evolution. Among them are Eugène Dubois's discovery of Java Man; Charles Walcott's discovery of the Burgess Shale and the evidence it provided for the Cambrian explosion; and Neil Shubin's recent discovery in arctic

Canada of Tiktaalik, the intermediary between water- and land-dwelling vertebrates. Carroll closes with studies of human evolution, from Louis and Mary Leakey to the advances of Linus Pauling and Allan Wilson, which indicated that Neanderthals were cousins of Homo sapiens rather than direct ancestors. While there's little that's new here, Carroll does weave an arresting tapestry of evolutionary advancement. Photos, maps. (Feb. 10) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"These scientific adventurers inspire the author and will do the same for experts and novices alike with their fearless dedication to getting at the truth, as far as it can be known. A stirring introduction to the wonder of evolutionary biology." --Kirkus Review, 12/15/08

The Greatest Story Ever Told  
The title of the book is "Remarkable Creatures" and the author is Sean B. Carroll. I have read other books by this author and my appetite for a worthwhile reading experience perks up whenever I learn that he is the author of a book, which I have not yet read. I gave this book five stars because I believe the author beautifully achieved his objective of telling the story of the evolution of living things in an engaging way. Essentially, he has selected key pioneers in advancing mankind's knowledge of our origins and told their stories in a compelling manner. Within each biographical sketch is an important breakthrough event in the overall story of evolutionary understanding. I believe that Carroll thought very carefully about which stories, from the thousands before him, to include to give the reader a condensed, yet broad overview of man's unearthing of the greater picture. He selected the stories well and arranged their sequence of presentation to progressively educate the reader, so that he/she could appreciate the science underlying the more recent and more technical stories. For example, the discovery of DNA's structure allowed major breakthroughs. Yet, you will need to know some basics to follow the stories. Carroll guides you along skillfully. These evolutionary pioneers were highly dedicated and heroic in my estimation. Many of them had to endure discouragement from the contemporary scientific world, endure personal hardship, poverty, and self-doubt while attempting to prove their beliefs. Even after compiling the evidence and presenting it, they were too often ridiculed by the old school experts, whom they had hoped to impress. It seems that part of the process of the advancement of knowledge includes the dying off of the old regime and the rise to power of the more youthful. Many of the stories involve the fierce battle of ideas. Yet, conflict is the keystone to compelling literature. If these heroes were not appreciated in their time, at least we can appreciate them now by hearing

their stories. I believe that "Remarkable Creatures" is written in a style such that almost any reader will benefit from it. If anything, it would probably be of greatest benefit to those who know very little about evolution. It is like an intriguing sampler, which should motivate the reader to want to know more about the subject. If you are already an advanced student of evolution, you may already know many of these stories, yet may still appreciate the delightful way Carroll presents the material. Some potential readers may be hesitant for religious reasons. They would benefit the most because this is a story of the scientific process in action. It is a story of the intellectual conflict, which is the crucible of the scientific process. It is a story of the never-ending search for the truth. It is a true story about us and that makes it the greatest story ever told. Ralph D. Hermansen, June 8, 2013

Loved the progressions of discovery through time. This is a book I could read without needing much background. My only background being a basic knowledge of Darwin, I found the progress of scientific exploration educational and necessary knowledge.

A good book that provide me with more details of the great scientists that made scientific history. Most the characters in this book, most people that follow science have heard of and read about there accomplishments. This book bring out there personal lives, struggles and hardships along with excellent details of there discoveries and ideas from great scientists. To mentioned of a few that fascinated me was of :Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace, where two men came to the same conclusion, separately. Eugene Dubois probably the luckiest, found the Java Man. Father and son of the Alvarez's shows science can work in mysterious ways, where it so happens that these two working in different fields of science that so happens to find of a clay layer that had no signs of fossils sandwich between Cretaceous and Tertiary periods layers that they so happen to ask a question, "What is it and where did it come from?" Doing some testing that so happen to contain a high concentration of a mineral that is rare on the Earth and with there analysis along with several scenarios, so happen to come up with a scenario that is still standing within the scientific community. This is the luckiest of the "So Happens" discovery for the Scientific Community. The Louis and Mary Leakey persistence and dedication along with there hardships, gave us the greatest discoveries of the ancestors of Mankind. They showed us who we are and were we came from and it didn't require any Devine help. The Fishapod shows how Evolution, geology and the history of earth can be used to make predictions, search the right age along with the right environments in the rock formations to look for and find a fossil that is transiting from a fish to an

amphibian can be the most verification of the Evolutionary process. Science can't get better than this. Now the part of your book of the Neanderthals (Nea) and Homo Sapiens (we) has been a constant confusion to me. I had a scenario by which the Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens were separate species each evolving from an earlier Hominid separately and independently from each other. Now I never got clear if the Sapiens and Neanderthals had evolved from the same earlier Hominid or different ones, whatever, in either case, this would make them separate species. Now I watched a program called "Decoding the Neanderthals" that claimed that we share some genes like 1 to 4%. If we got these genes directly from Nea through sexual activity that made fertile offspring, then we would not be separate species, but only different races. If this is the case, then who came from who? Since Nea is older (300,000 years old) than we are (180,000 years old), then we would have had to evolve from them or some race between us and them. How does this work with Out of Africa scenario? This 1 to 4% statistical analysis, what is the degree of error. It would have to be extremely small for +/-2% would make it invalid. Now these genes that we are sharing has something to do with resistance to diseases that both we and Nea were exposed to. Then could it be that we solved an old problem, the same old way. In other words, with repeatable mutations, we came up with the same solution of resisting these diseases. If this is the case, then of course we would be carrying the same genes as Nea, but not directly. The only science that I wished this book would have addressed was Plate Tectonics. This is a fantastic story that evolved a weather scientists, ocean explorations, the Cold war, magnetic polarity, rifting mountain ranges, trenches all working separately and independently from each other that took many decades that eventually came together with a scenario of a dynamic Earth. This dynamic Earth is the driving force of Evolution. Another process that illustrates how science can work in mysterious ways. I hope his next book will include this fantastic story.

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