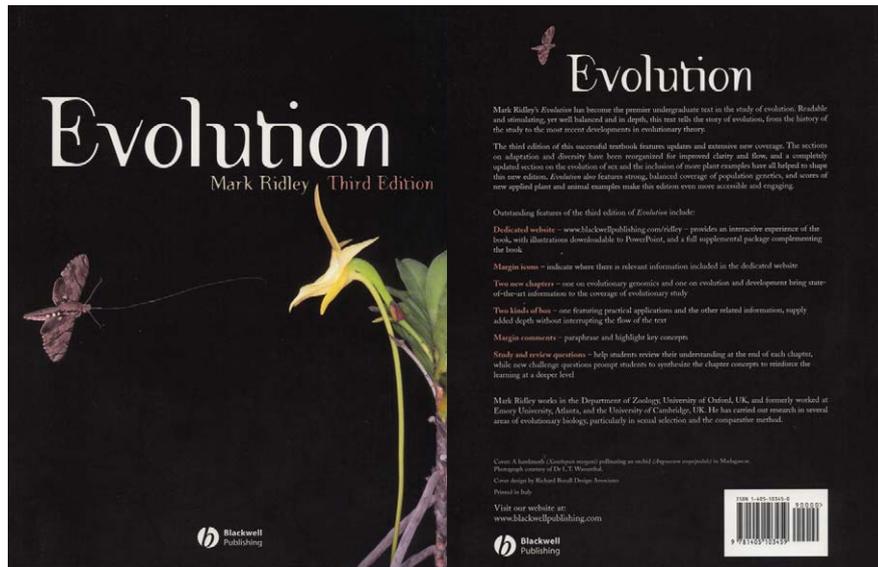


Ridley, M. 2004 (3rd Edition). *Evolution*. - Malden, Blackwell Publishing

Book review by N. den Ouden



Text books: they are big, heavy, so dense with information that you'll need a machete to get through, and expensive. As Bill Bryson says in his 'A short history of nearly Everything': "There seemed to be a mystifying universal conspiracy among textbook authors to make certain the material they dealt with never strayed too near the realm of the mildly interesting and was always at least a long-distance phone call from the frankly interesting (p. 22)". And as students often won't have the diligence nor the time to actually read them from cover to cover, why spend the money?

Well, this book is different (unless of course you are a biology student with a test coming up tomorrow and still half of the book to read). Okay, with its 750 pages, it is fairly hefty. And with almost two kilograms bearing down on your lap, it's hardly something to grab on your way to the park. But that doesn't really matter, because it is the inside that counts. This book is impressively organised, with the main text in plain black on a white background and further in-depth information provided in concise green boxes. Green is used as an accent colour throughout the book, making it very easy on the eyes. Where necessary, effective illustrations (again using the accent colour green for consistency) and attractive black and white photographs are added. Every chapter also ends on a handy summary along with suggestions for further reading. To keep yourself in check and to ensure that you have remembered the key pieces of information, a number of study and review questions are provided, too.

The book covers four main themes: evolutionary genetics; adaptation and natural selection; evolution and diversity; and macroevolution. The examples illustrating the theoretical framework are sometimes standard, but then again, these are probably the best examples available. They definitely serve the overall purpose of educating and enlightening, and the book is very clear and readable. While the book is aimed at undergraduate students, anyone interested in the subject can also find it readable and stimulating.

I have found the book very useful, not only as a students' text book, but its comprehensive index also makes it a great reference book that can be called upon when writing an article or needing to settle a heated pub argument about multilocus population genetics.

Ridley, M. 2004 (3rd Edition). *Evolution*. - Malden, Blackwell Publishing. 792 pp. ISBN 9781405103459. Price £31.99 (paperback).