

Evolution by natural selection as [formulated] proposed by Charles Darwin is one of the most important and far-reaching ideas ever formulated, as it provides the basic mechanism whereby evolution has created the enormous diversity of life. David Quammen's objectives with his book were to offer a concise yet insightful overview of the background, birth and development of Darwin's idea of natural selection, and to consider the reasons for Darwin's reluctance in making his theory public. Indeed, there were many reasons why Darwin might have wanted to keep his evolutionary views to himself. These included the fear of rejection from a science corps whose natural history was based largely on teleological ideals with foundations in religious agendas, as well as his personal relationship with his beloved wife Emma, a pious Christian. In the end, it was Darwin's receipt of a manuscript from Alfred Russel Wallace, who at the time was collecting beautiful bird and insect specimens somewhere in the Malay Archipelago, which prompted the eventual publication of *On The Origin of Species* in 1859.

Quammen outlines this momentous piece of history concisely and does not attempt to compete with other more exhaustive biographies that provide a more detailed and scholarly account of Darwin's idea. The result is a very readable book that, despite the fact that Quammen is not an academic scientist, is based on thorough research of original background material. Hence, this book follows in the tradition of Quammen's previous successes, most notably *The Song of the Dodo* (1996), his outstanding and award

winning volume on island biogeography. Several interesting aspects of Darwin's life are also highlighted, such as his mysterious illness, characterized by dizziness, stomach pain, and bouts of illness, often flaring up under stressful conditions. Darwin spent weeks on end at health clinics, surrendering his body to coldwater treatments, hoping to rid himself of the persistent ailment. The book also describes a number of the small natural history experiments that Darwin performed to understand the mechanisms of evolution, such as submerging common vegetable seeds in brine solution to investigate the possibility of over water dispersal, or dangling duck feet in water to see if gastropods would climb aboard on a flight destined for other ponds. With these sorts of amusing passages highlighting the development of the most important idea in biology, *The Reluctant Mr. Darwin* should be of great interest to naturalists regardless of whether they are deeply aware of evolutionary theory or simply familiar with Darwin's work. The good quality of the material in this volume, along with Quammen's command of the English language, makes this book well worth the read.

Literature Cited

Quammen, D. 1996. *The Song of the Dodo – Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions*. Hutchinson/Pimlico/Random House of Canada Limited, Mississauga, Ontario.

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A Field Guide to Gold, Gemstones & Mineral Sites of British Columbia, Sites Within a Day's Drive of Vancouver

By Rick Hudson. 2006. Volume 2. Revised Edition. Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., P.O. Box 219, Madeira Park, British Columbia V0N 2H0 Canada. 368 pages. 8 illustrations \$16.95 CAD

Rick Hudson has succeeded in expressing his passion for mineral collecting through his field guide book. On a second level he also tries to promote a sense of adventure by teasing the reader to go out and explore or prospect for nature's buried treasures.

The author structured the book so the reader can easily cross-reference required information in the lengthy location lists. A "How to Use This Book" and a "Quick Reference Guide" help to quickly locate items of interest throughout the book.

The book cover illustrates the hobby of mineral collecting as a family activity. Hudson educates the reader from first principles on how to become a Rockhound. To accomplish this, he describes how to prepare yourself by choosing proper clothing, safety gear, collecting tools and maps. He warns the future mineral collector about natural hazards they may encounter such as; rattlesnakes, grizzly bears and ticks. Ethics, access rights and mineral rights are also discussed to

keep the collector within acceptable collecting practices and to avoid unintentional trespassing.

Mineral collecting is attractive to many people because as you find an interesting mineral specimen, you want to learn how nature created it and or its geological history. The author included short geological descriptions partitioned by collecting areas as well as mining histories of local economic importance within the collecting area.

Colour plates illustrate the minerals found in some of the collecting sites and detailed occurrence maps are included in all the collecting area sections throughout the book. The colour plates represent minerals that are possible to find in the collecting sites. Government mineral index files were included in the locality information along with detailed road log descriptions.

The author has made a successful merger of personal knowledge and technical data to compile an informative volume which can provide years of enjoyment for many future rockhounds and their families and friends.

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