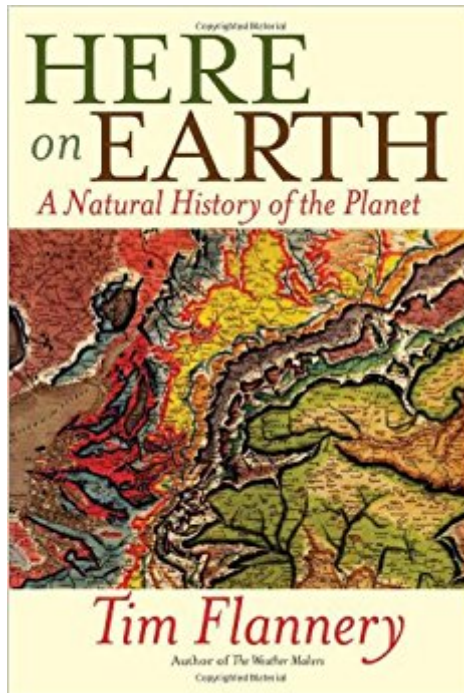


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Here On Earth: A Natural History Of The Planet



Synopsis

Tim Flannery's first major book since *The Weather Makers* charts the history of life on our planet. Here on Earth, which draws its points of departure from Darwin and Wallace, Lovelock and Dawkins, is an extraordinary exploration of evolution and sustainability. Our success as a species has had disastrous effects on many of the Earth's ecosystems and could lead to our downfall. But equally, Flannery argues, we are now equipped as never before to explore our true relationship with the planet on which our biological, economic, and cultural futures depend. Here on Earth is not just a dazzling account of life on our planet. It will change the way you live. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Pgw (April 5, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 080211976X

ISBN-13: 978-0802119766

ASIN: B0076TM254

Product Dimensions: 9 x 6 x 1.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars Â See all reviews Â (68 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,031,116 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #102 in Â Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geology > Historical #1806 in Â Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Natural History #1929 in Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Environmental Policy

Customer Reviews

UPDATE 4/25/2011: When I am wrong, mistaken, or unduly harsh, I need to admit it. I am upgrading my original stars from 3 to 4 because I find myself thinking about this book and its subject still today. Even when surfing the cable TV, I am searching out some of the better stations and shows on this topic and Flannery's book not only raised my awareness but provides a pretty rich framework for these other resources. I apologize if anyone finds this disingenuous; I have no evil motive here. When a book lingers in my mind like this and changes how I see the world (and TV), I have to extend more credit than I did initially. With the US version of *Here On Earth*, Tim Flannery seems to be offering a Grand Unified Theory of The Current State Of The Earth. He pulls from a

virtual A-to-Z of disciplines such as agronomics, anthropology, archaeology, astrobiology, biochemistry, civics, climatology, cosmology, criminology, demography, ecology, economics, ethnology, finance, game theory, genealogy, genetics, geography, geology, geopolitics, humanism, mythology, politics, sociobiology, theology, zoogeography, and zoology. This is no exaggeration; in fact, I am probably leaving something out. So it is no surprise that along this ambitious journey, Flannery will lose a few readers from any field and for any number of ideological reasons. And those not put off by the words "sustainability" or "apes" will ultimately be dissatisfied to learn that despite the subtitle "A Natural History Of The Planet" and the frequent historical references to natural things, this is not a rigorous natural history.

The product description of this book touts it as a natural history of the planet Earth, from its earliest stages of formation through the evolution of humanity. That description sounded exactly like something that I was looking for. What I got, however, is something entirely different. What you get with this book is, well, how can I say this without being too abrasive? Maybe it's not possible. To be kind, you just don't get what you are told you are going to get. And, what you actually get, speaking frankly, is a whole boatload of light-weight new-age philosophy mixed with Flannery's personal musings, and smatterings of lighter-weight science and pseudoscience (e.g., Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis). Of course, scientific heavy weights such as Charles Darwin, E.O. Wilson, and others are referred to, but they are not the central focus of this book. Clearly Flannery is his own main show in this book. I mean, I plowed on and on, working my way into this book, wading through Flannery's musings and suppositions on this and that, hoping that I'd eventually get to the natural history of the planet part of the book AND IT NEVER GETS THERE! What the book does provide is a focus on Lovelock's new-age-ish Gaia hypothesis, laced with all kinds of messages about human impacts on Gaia, and our inability to even adequately manage the planet. Now Flannery will get no arguments from me on the last count, but the main issue is that this book is NOT what it claims to be. I felt duped by a bait-and-switch marketing tactic, and now that I'm done with this book I'm THROUGH with it. Off it goes to the recycle bin.

Tim Flannery's new book, *Here on Earth: A Natural History of the Planet*, is not a "history" in any traditional sense; it is more of a plea for a more responsible stewardship of our earth and a warning that this is the watershed century in human history. Decisions made during the 21st century regarding human use and misuse of the environment will determine whether or not the planet will continue to be habitable for human life as we know it. My initial impression of the book was

reinforced by my viewing an interview with Professor Flannery on YouTube, in which he discusses the book [...] If I understand Flannery correctly, he is arguing that what we believe will determine our future more than our ever-expanding technology. If we human beings are destroying our environment by our reckless exploitation of the earth's natural resources, it is because we do not understand how we arrived at this moment in history. Professor Flannery is an evolutionist. But, he argues that the process of evolution has been widely misunderstood. He illustrates this misunderstanding--what Darwin referred to as "descent with modification"--by contrasting Charles Darwin with Alfred Russel Wallace--the detailed scientist with the grand synthesizer. Darwin and Wallace were "co-founders" of the modern theory of evolution. As evolution gained widespread acceptance during the last half of the nineteenth century, scientists and non-scientists alike emphasized the idea of struggle and survival of the fittest. Flannery contends that it was, and is, the perversion of Darwin and Wallace's theories by Herbert Spencer and the so-called "Social Darwinists" that has resulted in the willful destruction of the environment.

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