

Outreach Book List - Biology

Biology			
Title of book	Suggested by	Blurb	Review
1 Why Evolution is True by Jerry Coyne	<i>Suggested by Katherine Davis, Research Postgraduate School of Public Health</i>	While other books describe the concept and the processes by which evolution proceeds, <i>Why Evolution is True</i> presents the evidence: using modern science to demonstrate the 'indelible stamp' of the process first proposed by Darwin. Allows the reader to understand all the evidence, drawn from diverse areas of modern science, which supports Darwinian evolution. Presents the very latest research from the fields of genetics, palaeontology, geology, molecular biology, anatomy, and development.	<i>I read "Why Evolution is True" for the first time after I decided to study biology at university. I loved the way Coyne weaves together different fields, including genetics, molecular biology and anatomy, with colourful and interesting examples from across the living world. Everything is linked in a clear and accessible way to the central argument - Coyne takes a true scientist's approach as he tours the evidence and examines the details. Reading this book, I began to understand how evolution is the golden thread tying together all of the fields of biology - it changed my perspective on the natural world. If you're interested in studying biology, or understanding evolution, I would thoroughly recommend picking up this book!</i>
2 The Blind Watchmaker – Richard Dawkins	<i>Suggested by Dr Jenny Cooke, Mentoring and Tutoring Programme, Manager</i>	Acclaimed as the most influential work on evolution written in the last hundred years, <i>The Blind Watchmaker</i> offers an inspiring and accessible introduction to one of the most important scientific discoveries of all time. A brilliant and controversial book which demonstrates that evolution by natural selection - the unconscious, automatic, blind yet essentially non-random process discovered by Darwin - is the only answer to the biggest question of all: why do we exist?	<i>The Blind Watchmaker explores the theory of evolution and was published after Dawkin's most well-known book, The Selfish Gene (where the term meme is first used!). I read it when I was studying A levels and found it really clear and easy to read. I loved reading a book about science that contained lots of scientific facts and information but also used examples and eloquent writing to form persuasive arguments. The simple descriptions taught at school around natural selection make sense but when you look at the world and the amazing complexity of living creatures it does sometimes seem impossible that this could happen by chance - this book gives you confidence that this could happen! I have read a few of Dawkin's later books which I found a little too strong in their anti-creationist arguments but this book balances this well.</i>
3 The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan	<i>Suggested by Joanna L Clasen, Research Postgraduate School of Public Health</i>	What should we have for dinner? Ten years ago, Michael Pollan confronted us with this seemingly simple question and, with <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> , his brilliant and eye-opening exploration of our food choices, demonstrated that how we answer it today may determine not only our health but our survival as a species. In the years since, Pollan's revolutionary examination has changed the way Americans think about food. Bringing wide attention to the little-known but vitally important dimensions of food and agriculture in America, Pollan launched a national conversation about what we eat and the profound consequences that even the simplest everyday food choices have on both ourselves and the natural world. Ten years later, <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> continues to transform the way Americans think about the politics, perils, and pleasures of eating.	<i>As a fan of cooking, and food in general, I found this book to be a fascinating read. It cuts across disciplines and shows the interwoven complexity of how science, economics, and culture influence our diets. The author takes a seemingly ordinary topic and turns it into an interesting and easy read. I am a student working in nutritional epidemiology, and I love books that provide a different perspective on food and nutrition.</i>
4 The Private Life of Plants by David Attenborough	<i>Suggested by Dr Annalisa Alexander, Head of Outreach</i>	Based on the immensely popular six-part BBC program that aired in the United States during the fall of 1995, this book offers what writer/filmmaker David Attenborough is best known for delivering: an intimate view of the natural world wherein a multitude of miniature dramas unfold. In the program and book, both titled <i>The Private Life of Plants</i> , Attenborough treks through rainforests, mountain ranges, deserts, beaches, and home gardens to show us things we might never have suspected about the vegetation that surrounds us.	<i>I've always been fascinated by plants ever since I was very young when someone gave me a Venus Fly Trap. Watching it catch flies (and perhaps over triggering it with a little prod here and there) made me want to know why it did it and what it did with the fly once its 'jaws' had closed. I watched the TV series that accompanied this book many years ago and I was amazed at just how incredible plants truly are. The book takes you through every part of a plant's life cycle, using examples, stunning photography and astounding facts. If you think that they are just boring green things that grow, make flowers, look nice and get us out of a trouble when we've forgotten a birthday, think again.... You'll learn just how sophisticated some are, how they can replicate insect pheromones or produce ultra violet light to attract the right pollinators, aggressively stop other plants encroaching on their space and actually repel other organisms with a hideous stench. I challenge you NOT to be amazed by just how highly evolved some plants are. You'll never look at an orchid in the same light.... Literally...</i>