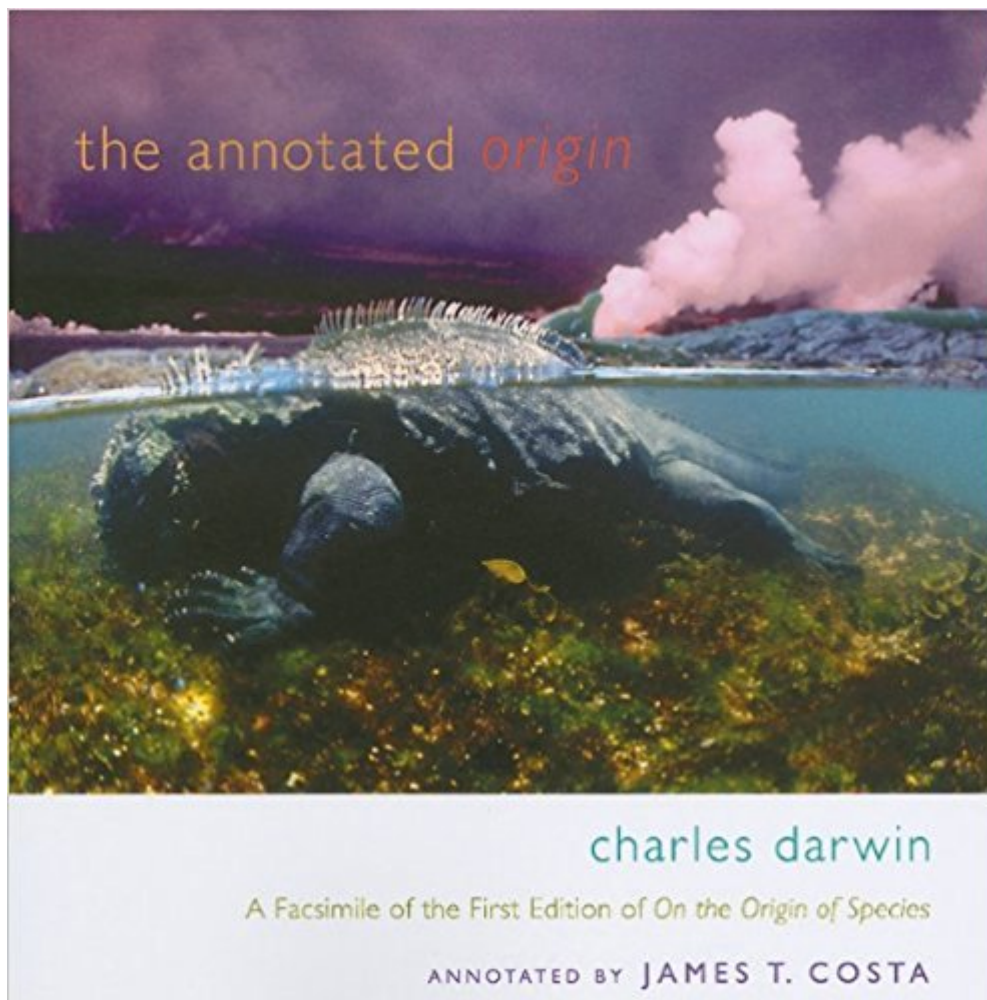




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# The Annotated Origin: A Facsimile Of The First Edition Of On The Origin Of Species



## Synopsis

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* is the most important and yet least read scientific work in the history of science. Now James T. Costa—experienced field biologist, theorist on the evolution of insect sociality, and passionate advocate for teaching Darwin in a society in which a significant proportion of adults believe that life on earth has been created in its present form within the last 10,000 years—has given a new voice to this epochal work. By leading readers line by line through the *Origin*, Costa brings evolution's foundational text to life for a new generation. The *Annotated Origin* is the edition of Darwin's masterwork used in Costa's course at Western Carolina University and in Harvard's Darwin Summer Course at Oxford. A facsimile of the first edition of 1859 is accompanied by Costa's extensive marginal annotations, drawing on his extensive experience with Darwin's ideas in the field, lab, and classroom. This edition makes available an accessible, useful, and practical resource for anyone reading the *Origin* for the first time or for those who want to reread it with the insights and perspective that a working biologist can provide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*On the Origin of Species* has too long been one of those worthy books whose fate is to be lauded but unread. Jim Costa's deft commentary—an authoritative and engaging mix of history and science—will change that. The *Origin* is forbidding and inaccessible no longer—it has evolved! The *Annotated Origin* restores, for modern readers, the freshness and excitement that made it a

bestseller when it first appeared. Charles Darwin, I'm sure, couldn't wish for a better 200th birthday present. (Andrew Berry, editor of *Infinite Tropics: An Alfred Russel Wallace Anthology*) Despite being 150 years old, the *Origin* is a living text for biologists. It is full of unsurpassed natural history observations, a model of careful scientific argument that still can catch the imagination with the grandeur of the views it puts forward. Jim Costa has provided an exceptionally lucid explanation. (Janet Browne, author of *Charles Darwin: The Power of Place*) Brilliant. (Bernd Heinrich, author of *The Snoring Bird: My Family's Journey through a Century of Biology*) The Annotated *Origin* is a culminating and, in an original manner of its own, the most useful of the centennial Darwin publications. It gives you the choice of reading page by page the original *Origin*, or its modern interpretation, or both together. (Edward O. Wilson) Jim Costa does a wonderful job of annotating Darwin's groundbreaking classic *On the Origin of Species*. In more than 900 notes, he explains, expands, contextualizes and updates much of what Darwin had to say about evolution and its causes. | Costa's thoughtful and informative notes enable readers to gain a much fuller appreciation for Darwin's genius and breadth of knowledge. • a fine tribute in the great scientist's bicentennial year. (Publishers Weekly 2009-03-09) Clearly worth attention. | Costa makes use of his experience as a field naturalist and his knowledge of the modern literature of evolutionary biology to illumine many passages in Darwin's work. (Richard C. Lewontin New York Review of Books 2009-05-28) Everyone knows about [*On the Origin of Species*], but I venture to guess that few non-scholars have actually read it. Now, along comes James T. Costa with this facsimile. The index to the new edition, and especially Costa's wonderful annotations, make this classic text not only approachable, but positively inviting. | Biologists will probably enjoy this book, but it is a particular gift to laypeople, especially to biology teachers. They can take excerpts from the book into their classes and show their students how Charles Darwin arrived at his insightful and revolutionizing idea. (Dudley Barlow Education Digest 2009-11-01) The Annotated *Origin* should be on the shelf of every practitioner of the life sciences. James T. Costa has rendered a valuable service to the profession by making the single most influential work in the history of biology both accessible and relevant to modern readers. Costa is aware that most students of biological science have at best merely glanced at Darwin's great book, but certainly have never read it through. By making visible what he calls the breathtaking sweep of Darwin's method, he has made a compelling argument for taking a page from Darwin's playbook in making the case for biological evolution. | Darwin has sometimes been portrayed as a plodding scientist, a good observer whose second-rate status is masked by the pregnancy of the grand idea he stumbled upon. Costa's work is a wonderful refutation of this portrait. No one who follows Costa through *The Annotated Origin* can possibly

doubt Darwin's exceptional stature. There is no better tribute he could have made for this celebration of Darwin's 200th birthday and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his masterpiece. (Frederick Gregory BioScience 2009-11-01) It's entirely possible that when the overwhelming and heartwarming cascade of attention to the 2009 anniversary of Darwin's 1809 birth and 1859 publication of *On the Origin of Species* has at last subsided, the palm for Best in Show will go to James Costa's beautifully-produced and scrupulously, joyously annotated version of the *Origin*. The idea is so simple that it flies considerably below the fray of mammoth biographies and shrill pie-fights with the so-called 'New Atheists': take the text of one of the most seminal and subversive books ever written, and add a thoroughly informed and entertaining running commentary. This is exactly what Costa does, and it bears all the marks of being a labor of love. This is the finest book of its kind ever produced. It should tide you over quite well until 2059. (Steve Donoghue Open Letters Monthly 2009-10-29) I should like to recommend the best, and most informative book to emerge from the [Darwin Year] extravaganza. It merits reading with complete attention, for it is also a fairly honest book, presenting Darwin in his historical context, and in the evolution of his own thinking, while drawing lines of connection, wherever they can be found, between the original insights and the best lab and field work of 'neo-Darwinism' today. The book is by James T. Costa, entitled *The Annotated Origin*. The first edition of *Origin of Species* is reprinted on wide pages with annotations down the outside columns. There are supplementary aids, including an excellent biographical directory of Darwin's predecessors and contemporaries. No one seriously interested in Darwinian phenomena should dare not to buy this book. (David Warren Ottawa Citizen 2009-09-27) Ably edited by James Costa, *The Annotated Origin* contains many of the annotations that the original *Origin of Species* lacked, and provides the reader with a comprehensive grounding in the natural history that Darwin marshaled in support of his revolutionary theory. (Allen MacNeill EvolutionList.blogspot.com 2009-11-11) Costa has placed a facsimile of the first edition of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* side-by-side with a thorough page-by-page commentary. He applies his considerable experience as a field biologist in addressing critical passages in Darwin's work. Previous efforts to annotate important books concentrated mainly on works of literature, but this effort examines one of the most important books in the history of science. Costa's annotations provide enormously helpful information about all of Darwin's editions of the *Origin*, and students from all levels of the natural sciences and the history of science will welcome this work. (J. S. Schwartz Choice 2010-01-01) One of the beauties of this finely-crafted tour of Darwin's *Origin* is that you can wander through it at will and still find a firmly-connected story of biology. When you read the original Darwin, the beauty of his prose

makes you almost ignore his logic. Costa crisply navigates the currents of Darwin here, as he does steadily throughout his bookâ | Costa teaches clearly, interestingly and relentlessly to the endâ | [An] illuminating book. I suggest making this book a required reference source in evolution classes. (Joseph L. Fail, Jr. Evolution: Education and Outreach 2010-09-01) We have long had the simple facsimile of the all-important first edition of the Origin, published by the same press (Harvard) with a short introduction by the eminent evolutionist Ernst Mayr. Now we have a much expanded work, with the most interesting comments and brief essays by a first-class biologist lined up on the pages against the original text. (Michael Ruse Quarterly Review of Biology 2010-03-01) A masterful, refreshing, thoroughly enjoyable and sometimes novel perspective on Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Speciesâ | With copious notes placed in the large margins of a beautiful facsimile of the first edition, Costa provides an eclectic but extraordinarily useful and insightful series of cross-references, natural history trivia, updates, expansions and comparisons to modern data, historical context, methodology, philosophy and biographical details. This book is no mere coffee-table showpieceâ | This lovingly created work must be rated as one of the most important resources available for Darwin scholarship and education. (David H. A. Fitch Nature Cell Biology 2010-05-01)

James T. Costa is Executive Director of Highlands Biological Station and Professor of Biology at Western Carolina University.

Absolutely indispensable commentary included for every page of the original text. Clarifications, references, insight and context. A must-have for anyone who considers themselves a scientist, and any student of natural history.

It is very nice to be able to have an annotated version of this classic! It helps to understand more clearly the not usual language of that time.

The original book is very dense and covers many examples for each point Darwin tries to make. The annotation makes it much easier for students to comprehend.

Needed book quickly for class; it was right on time. Fit the description, no surprises. Definitely will order again. N problems.

This is the best edition available (as far as I am aware) of one of the most important books ever written, in which Darwin provided the answer to what had been called the "mystery of mysteries", the origin of species. Darwin shows that "species are not immutable"; that all living creatures are linked by common descent; and that natural selection is the mechanism by which evolutionary change takes place. This edition really does provide the best of both worlds. It gives us a facsimile of the first edition of "On the Origin of Species" side by side with up-to-date explanations and comments by James T. Costa. You do not have to be a scientific specialist to read the "Origin", but I do feel that you can get more out of it if you have first read a modern introduction to evolution such as Ernst Mayr's "What Evolution Is" or Jerry Coyne's "Why Evolution Is True". This, along with Costa's annotations, allows you to appreciate what Darwin got right and what he got wrong, as well as the historical context of the times. There were things that Darwin could not know 150 years ago: he knew nothing of modern genetics or the causes of variation; he mistakenly thought that the Lamarckian inheritance of acquired characteristics played a part in evolution; and later theorists such as Ernst Mayr have added to our understanding of how one species branches off from another in the speciation process. This is where the prior reading I have suggested and Costa's annotations are particularly useful. I must admit that there are sections (those on variation and hybridism, for example) that I found myself skimming. But, on the other hand, chapters such as those on the "Struggle for Existence" and "Natural Selection" drew me into reading every word. Stephen Jay Gould summed up Darwin by saying that he was conservative in his personal life, liberal in his political views (in his strong opposition to slavery for example), and radical in his scientific ideas. I'll end with Darwin's own succinct summary, from his Introduction, of the most important of these radical scientific ideas, his theory of natural selection: "As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form." Phil Webster. (England)

Everyone has opinions about evolution, but how many people have actually read Darwin? If you haven't done so yet, you're missing out on what is surely one of the greatest books ever written, period. And this edition, which provides an authoritative facsimile of the famed first edition PLUS helpful, explanatory annotations, page-by-page, is the one to read. To some people, I suppose, Darwin's Origin will be dry reading... but that's not what readers thought in the mid-nineteenth

century, when the book created a sensation and, arguably, changed the way people conceptualize their position and role in the universe. I think Darwin's prose speaks just as powerfully today. The entire book amounts, as Darwin himself said, to an argument -- and it is an argument for the ages. What a magnificent work this is! Darwin engages the reader in a dialogue, presenting the plain facts as they were known at his time, and asking the reader to proceed, step by step. He begins by noting how knowledgeable breeders can modify domesticated organisms significantly by means of artificial selection -- and what is more, that they can do so in only a few generations. Building on his unmatched knowledge of nature, Darwin presents the book's fundamental, earth-shaking concept: the environment in which organisms live exerts a selection force of its own, which he calls natural selection. By no means does he depict a battle for survival, in which only the fiercest win; the game is far more complex, and in a series of breathtakingly vivid chapters, Darwin shows why: Deception and subterfuge may well be the master of ferocity and strength, depending on the changing, inexorable pressure of natural selection. But this is not a one-sided argument. Along the way, and indeed at every step, Darwin expressly points out the chief objections that can be raised to his argument, and addresses them, one by one. All along, the page-by-page annotations are crucial to the ability of modern readers to grasp Darwin's argument fully; they explain the issues at hand and explain how they've worked out in the many long years since the Origin's publication. I read Darwin's Origin only late in life, after a career of commitment to science, but I wish I had done so sooner, and in the company of this edition's expert annotations; I would have been emboldened all the more. For Darwin, lacking knowledge of Mendelian inheritance, DNA, and all the rest that we know today, nevertheless got the big picture right, and in ways that are far more intelligent and subtle than they are made out to be. Darwin's exploration of the role of sexual dimorphism in evolution, in particular, must be recognized, I believe, as one of the most extraordinary interpretive insights in the history of science. But as I have noted, the entire book, from page one until the final, unforgettable paragraph, is an argument; it must be read as such; and there is no finer guide to this majestic journey than this superbly annotated volume.

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