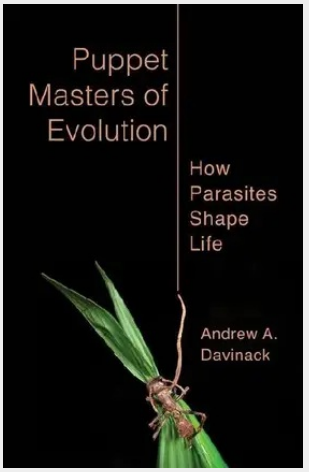
Davinack

Puppet Masters of Evolution

How Parasites Shape Life



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For centuries, parasites have been seen as nature’s freeloaders—organisms that exploit their hosts without contributing anything in return. But what if we have been thinking about them all wrong? In Puppet Masters of Evolution, Andrew A. Davinack reveals that parasites are far more than agents of disease or grotesque passengers along for the ride: They are powerful forces that have shaped the course of evolution. From microscopic viruses embedded in DNA to worms that alter the behavior of their hosts, parasites have influenced how species evolve, how ecosystems function, and even how human history unfolds. Drawing on cutting-edge research in molecular genetics, ecology, and evolutionary biology, this book takes readers on a journey through the strange and often unsettling world of parasitism. It explores the powers of mind-controlling parasites, the evolutionary arms race between hosts and invaders, and the surprising roles parasites play in regulating immune systems and stabilizing ecosystems. Davinack challenges the conventional view of parasites as purely harmful, showing that they are the hidden architects of life—spurring biological innovation, driving coevolution, and maintaining biodiversity. He also examines how human activity, from climate change to biotechnology and artificial intelligence, is transforming the future of parasitism in profound and unpredictable ways. Blending scientific insight with vivid storytelling, Puppet Masters of Evolution offers a bold new perspective on life itself.

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