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Posted on 13 June 2019 By Eric P. Widmaier

{Free Epub} ? Why Geese Don't Get

Obese (and We Do): How Evolution's Strategies for Survival Affect Our Everyday Lives

• eBook or E-pub free

This book is an excellent introduction to physiology for novices of the subject. Assuming no prior knowledge, but without a hint of condescension, Widmaier explains the basics of how animals work.

The book is split into chapters, each focusing on a particular problem that animals face and describing the solutions that different species have come to. For example, in the chapter 'Oxygen the breath of life', the issue examined is how animals in extreme environments can ensure that they have enough oxygen to function. Here, the Weddell seal is used to demonstrate the adaptations that have evolved in response to prolonged diving sessions in which the seal does not breathe for over an hour at a time. At the other end of the spectrum is the Barheaded goose, which flies over the Himalayan mountain range during its yearly migration. At this altitude the air pressure is lower, and consequently the goose has evolved some physiological tricks in order to get enough oxygen to power its annual pilgrimage.

The other chapters of the book follow in the same vein, posing physiological questions such as how animals get enough water or how they keep cool, and using anecdotes from animal life at the extremes to illustrate the answers.

An aspect of the book I particularly enjoyed was the way Widmaier has slotted historical references within the science discussed. His passion for the field of physiology comes across beautifully in these passages, adding vibrancy to the book and giving a great background for the more modern experiments which are based on these historical findings, such as William Harvey's discoveries in the mammalian circulatory system and Joseph Priestley's discovery of "good air" (oxygen to you and me). The bulk of these historical asides are found in the footnotes of the book, allowing readers uninterested in this area to easily skip over them.

Whilst I enjoyed this book overall, and would have liked to have rated it 4 stars, I have had to award it 3 stars due to my dislike of many of Widmaier's forays into discussing evolution. The use of the terms "primitive" and "lower vertebrates" particularly irked me, as these words do not really make evolutionary sense: all species on earth today are descended from one common ancestor, and as such have been evolving for as long as each other. All species are as "primitive" as each other. Other statements were simply incorrect: hominids

did not evolve to lose their fur because they began to wear clothes, as Widmaier asserts. Rather, a shift from forest living to dwelling in the African plains was likely the catalyst for the loss of fur in order to keep cool under the relentless sun. Clothes came later. Another incorrect statement is made saying that giraffes evolved long necks due to selective pressures to reach the higher leaves on trees. Most evolutionary biologists are in agreement that the remarkably tall necks actually evolved as a result of sexual selection: male giraffes partake in a behavior called 'neck fencing', whereby they repeatedly smash heads and necks together in order to determine who is the stronger, and therefore sexually dominant, male. The longer, thicker and stronger the neck, the more successful the male giraffe would be, allowing it to mate with more females and pass on more genes than male giraffes with shorter necks.

In summary, this book gives a wonderful grounding in basic physiological concepts in a language which can be understood by those with no prior experience of the subject. I would recommend it to anybody interested in how animals work, and how they can withstand life at the extremes. Just remember to take the text's evolutionary wanderings with a pinch of salt. Interesting ideas but kind of dry delivery. This book uses many interesting examples to illustrate its main points. Widmaier explains the basics of physiology in a practical context so that it is fairly easy to understand. This is one of the better nonfiction reads you will find, as it truly is interesting. I feel that this is a great tool for any biology student or anyone who is just curious about the way things work in an animal's body.

While explaining how things work in the human body and how they could be better, plentiful examples are provided to both amuse and teach the reader. The book addresses everything from how we become obese to the relative rates of metabolism in different species to the circulatory system and stress induced hormones. Widmaier even provides notes to elaborate on things he addresses in his book and provided some bibliographical information on important scientists and their contributions to physiology without making me fall asleep or daydream, which is no small feat.

After reading this book I can appreciate the work of physiologists, especially after reading the epilogue. I also learned many facts about the animal kingdom that would really make me seem smart in school and help clarify different concepts. From this book I learned that small animals such as shrews need to eat more than their body weight everyday because they have such a high metabolism, and that our ancestors developed a defense mechanism against starvation so that when they ate less their metabolism slowed, meaning that dieting can cause us to lose weight more slowly. I also read that fish cough to remove the gunk that collects in their gills as it flows through the gills to provide them with oxygen. This book also showed that humans have far inferior senses than many animals because of our

forebrain which is currently only found in humans and gives us the smarts to evade predators and get food among other things.

Overall, this book is perfect for someone who is looking for an interesting and intellectual read. Having some kind of background in biology is helpful when reading this book but it is readable by anyone from a middle school student upwards. Excellent book exploring some of those mysteries you've always wondered about. It explains why organisms' bodies do certain things.

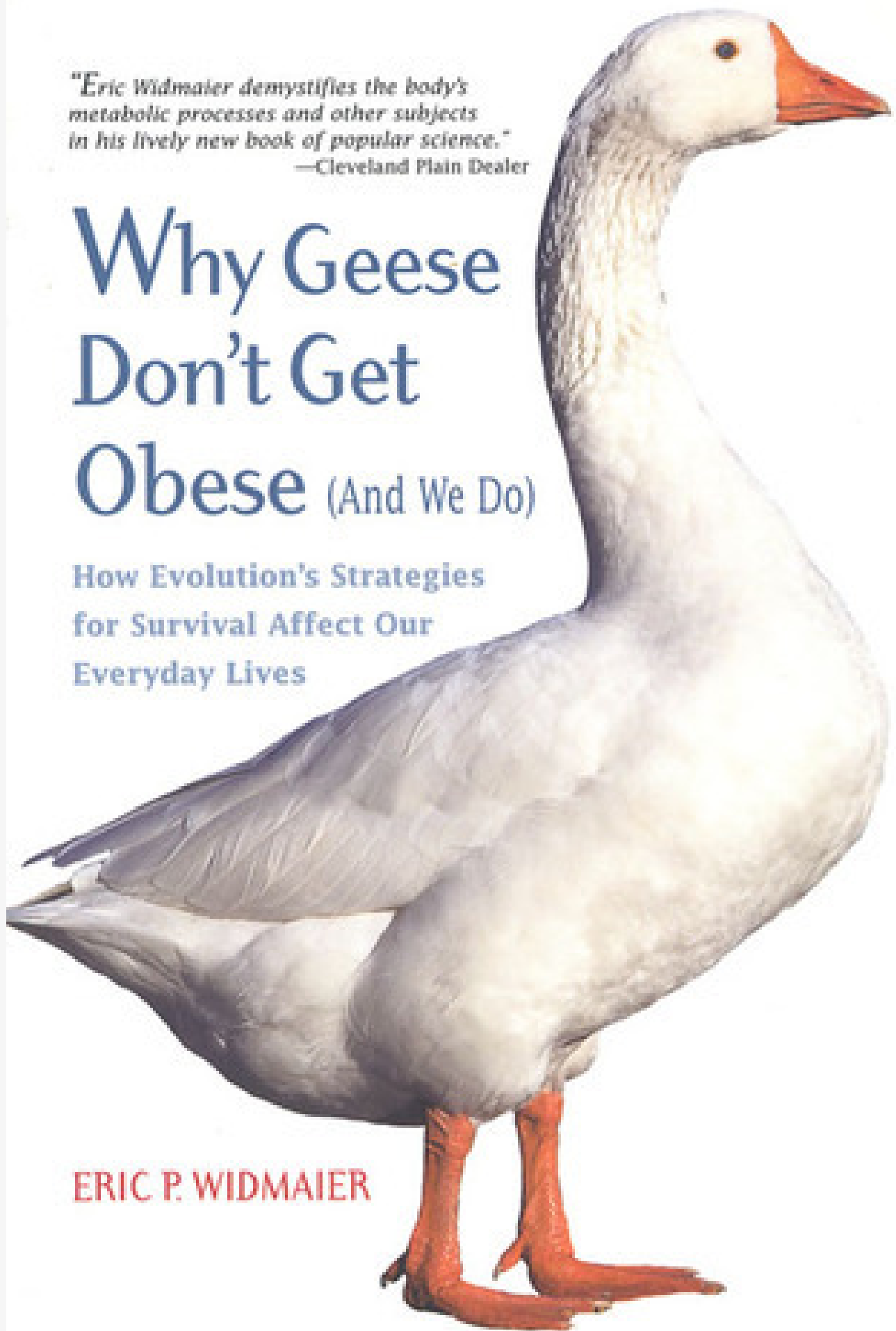
"Eric Widmaier demystifies the body's metabolic processes and other subjects in his lively new book of popular science."

—Cleveland Plain Dealer

Why Geese Don't Get Obese (And We Do)

How Evolution's Strategies
for Survival Affect Our
Everyday Lives

ERIC P. WIDMAIER



{Free Epub} ¾ Why Geese Don't Get Obese (and We Do): How Evolution's Strategies for Survival Affect Our Everyday Lives

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