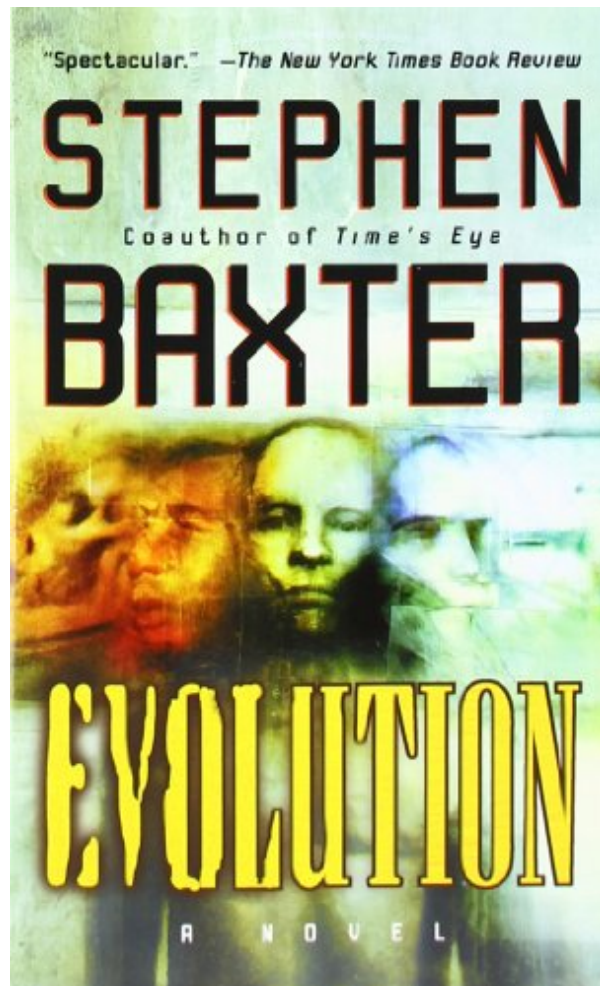


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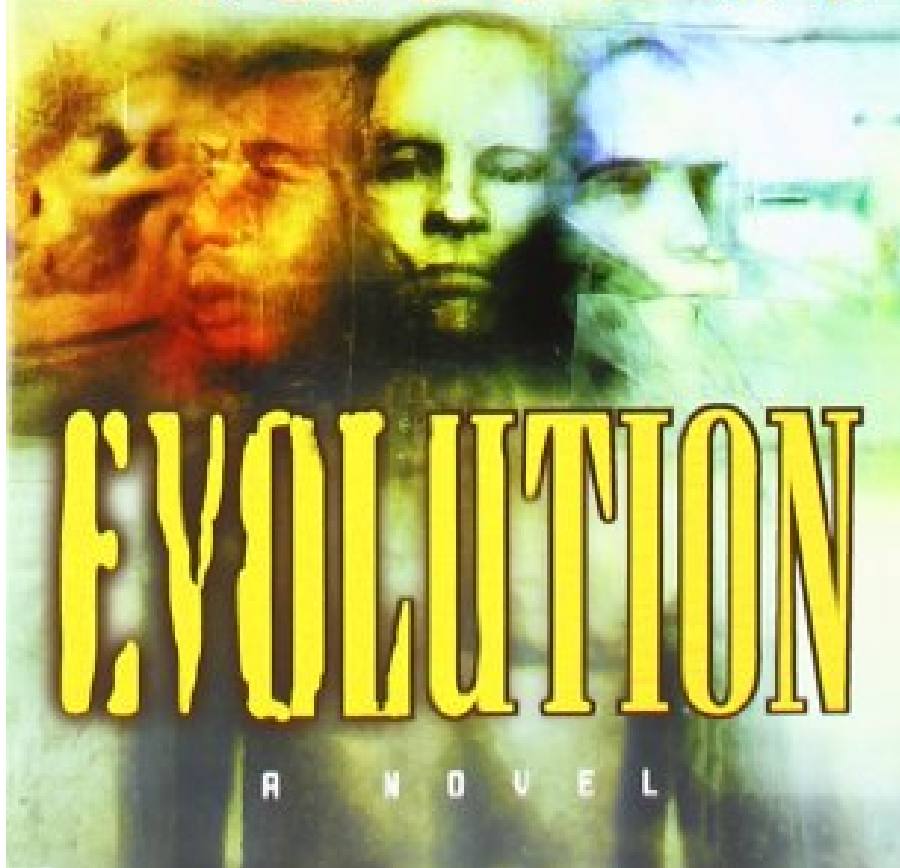


"Spectacular." —*The New York Times Book Review*

**STEPHEN**

Coauthor of *Time's Eye*

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Stretching from the distant past into the remote future, from primordial Earth to the stars, *Evolution* is a soaring symphony of struggle, extinction, and survival; a dazzling epic that combines a dozen scientific disciplines and a cast of unforgettable characters to convey the grand drama of evolution in all its awesome majesty and rigorous beauty. Sixty-five million years ago, when dinosaurs ruled the Earth, there lived a small mammal, a proto-primate of the species *Purgatorius*. From this humble beginning, Baxter traces the human lineage forward through time. The adventure that unfolds is a gripping odyssey governed by chance and competition, a perilous journey to an uncertain destination along a route beset by sudden and catastrophic upheavals. It is a route that ends, for most species, in stagnation or extinction. Why should humanity escape this fate?

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- 656 pages

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- Great product!

## Amazon.com Review

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Recommend for those who love to learn through stories

By David G. Phillips

I have been an ambassador for this book since I first started reading it - I can't tell you how much I enjoyed it, especially the vignette stories that lead up to our species as it exists today. I wanted to share a quote from the book that gives me chills to this day:

"Then he turned back to the savannah. He was bipedal, tool wielding, meat eating, xenophobic, hierarchal, combative, competitive - all of which he had brought from the forest - and yet he was imbued with the best qualities of his ancestors, with Purga's doggedness, Noth's exuberance, Roamer's courage, even Capo's vision. Full of possibilities of the future, laden with the relics of the past, the young male, standing upright, gazed at the open plain." - Stephen Baxter, *Evolution* (novel)

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating, it inspired me to learn more on the subject

By Norbert Haupt

*Evolution* is a novel of over 640 pages that was not an easy read, but superbly inspiring and thought-provoking. Reading *Evolution* was time extremely well spent, I learned immeasurably from it, and I am not yet done learning.

Evolution, while it is termed a novel, is not really a novel. Critics have blasted it as a series of short stories, loosely connected. A novel has a protagonist, a theme, and a plot that creates suspense which keeps the reader turning the pages. This book has none of that. The only motivator that keeps turning the pages of Evolution is an intense interest in the subject of the book. Evolution is not really a novel, but rather speculative natural history fiction.

Some reviewers of one star on Amazon blasted Baxter for this book. They ridiculed his science, the plausibility of the events and the structure and approach of the book. I think they are missing the point. Baxter is fully aware of the fact that he sometimes picked one of several conflicting scientific theories or premises and ran with it. There is a lot of speculation on what might have happened, and what might happen in the future, but it is mostly plausible at a minimum, often surprising or startling, and sometimes outright stunning.

Spoiler warning: I am going to talk about some details that might be considered spoilers, but I don't think they will take away anything from the enjoyment of the book at all, but rather, I think they might help inspire you to pick it up and read it yourself.

The main story starts in the Jurassic period. Baxter describes what the world might have been like during the height of the reign of the dinosaurs 145 million years ago. He describes the interactions of the various species of dinosaurs, those we know something about from the fossil record, and some that he outright made up. One of those made up speculative species is an "air whale", a pterosaur with a wingspan of over 100 feet that spends its entire life gliding and soaring in the stratosphere. Another is related to a type of raptor of about human size that had evolved as a hunter with intelligence advanced enough to make simple tools, like leather belts, leather whips and spears. I thought that was fascinating. There is no reason why such a species could not have become sophisticated enough 145 million years ago to make simple tools. As long as they didn't make stone tools that would last, there would be no fossil trace left today and we'd never know. Had the Yucatan impact 65 million years ago not happened, such a species might have continued on as the dominant intelligence on the planet, and produced advanced technology in the dinosaur realm. We mammals might never have existed.

The main story really begins with the demise of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Some scientists think the extinction took a few thousand years, some think a few years, and Baxter takes the view that it took no more than a few days to wipe out almost all the dinosaurs, making room for a small rat-like mammal called purgatorius. Some scientists speculate that this animal, due to its primate-like teeth may be the most distant ancestor of all monkeys, apes, hominids and yes, eventually humans. The book spends some time following these various animals in their environment, describes their surroundings and their challenges, before turning the clock forward to the next epoch.

In this manner, Baxter leads us closer to humanity one step at a time, up to the present, and then beyond. There were many extinction events in the history of the earth, and one is going on right now, where right now is defined to be the last 15,000 years up to now. Man has edged out many other species of man-like creatures over the past 100,000 years, but also apparently caused the extinction of many types of large mammals wherever man appears, including in the Americas and in Australia.

As Baxter ventures into the future, he does it in increasingly large steps. First he steps forward by a few thousand years. Then 30 million, then 500 million years. What happens to humans in his speculation is surprising. Humans devolve back, losing their intelligence, and they split into many different subspecies again, some giant elephantine creatures, other blind mole-like burrow dwellers, and yet others tree species like our ancestors. While some critics found that part of the book hard to swallow, I must admit I was



fascinated by the implications.

Reading through the prehistoric times I found myself sometimes frustrated by descriptions Baxter used to "show" what a purgatorius looked like, and a notharctus, and so on for dozens of now extinct animals. I wished there were illustrations to help with the imagery. Then I realized I could just get the appropriate books. I obtained Ice Age Mammals of North America by Ian M. Lange and National Geographic Prehistoric Mammals by Alan Turner, illustrated by Mauricio Anton. I also picked up The Evidence of Evolution by Alan R. Rogers. While I would never before have looked at these books, now every picture, every description, was eminently interesting. I found myself checking out the various animals, their time periods, and the circumstances of their reigns, and how they became extinct. I know so much more about natural history than I did before, and I have already concluded that it's time for me to go to a few museums of natural history as soon as possible to round out the experience.

All this interest and learning was sparked by a simple novel called Evolution that really is not a novel, but rather a speculation on natural history.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

educational SciFi

By jerknowsall

I read this book on a Kindle. It probably should have been entitled The Thread or The Strand because of the DNA linking the chapters. It was fascinating if a little overly imaginative toward the end. I'm not a fan of fantasy and this SciFi book seemed to be mostly believable. The organization of the book reminded me of Michener's "The Source", which is also a book worth reading.

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