

Darwin's Island – The Galapagos in the Garden of England by Steve Jones.  
Little Brown 2009.

In the bicentenary of Charles Darwin's birth, and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the publication of his most famous work, *The Origin of Species*, there have been a significant number of books published about the man and his work. I would have read Professor Steve Jones' book on the subject, even had I eschewed others, because in my opinion he is one of the finest popular science writers around and I have read all his other books. I am happy to report that *Darwin's Island* does not disappoint, and shows Steve Jones firing on all cylinders and writing with his customary wit and insight.

Jones divides his *homage* into 9 chapters, each inspired by a different area of Darwin's work, for he was a prolific writer whose reputation deserves to rest on much more than the *Origin* and the *Descent of Man*. So there are chapters on insect-eating plants, emotional responses in human beings and animals, the genetic implications of inbreeding, the behaviour of climbing plants, the implications and outcomes of domestication, a wonderful chapter inspired by Darwin's obsession with barnacles, orchids and their pollination and earth worms. There is also an envoi which looks pessimistically forward to an uncertain future.

Steve Jones writes with the authority that might be expected of a Professor of Genetics, but also with wit and a strong sense of bringing his subject to as wide an audience as possible; he also does not feel constrained from interspersing his Darwin-specific material with thoughts on the changes to the environment and the earth's species inflicted by human action and what this portends for the future.

One concludes *Darwin's Island* with enhanced respect for the genius of its subject, and renewed admiration for the author.

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