We know much about our history from bones and DNA, but these studies do not tell us about the characteristics that are not preserved in the fossil record—the fleshy parts and behaviors of our ancestors. Evolutionary biologists are more interested in the processes of evolution than the patterns; what caused the changes we see in the fossil record? *Looking Down the Tree* applies evolutionary principles to understand the history of our species and the pressures of natural selection that led to our unique appearance and behaviors.

Cruzan draws upon evidence from fossils, genomics, phylogenetics, coalescence theory, and the anatomy and physiology of human ancestors and other animals to arrive at an understanding of the origin of human appearance and behavior. This evidence is discussed in the context of comparative biology, natural and sexual selection, evolutionary constraints, inbreeding and inclusive fitness, and genetic and cultural evolution.

"Mitch Cruzan's research is on evolutionary processes in plants, but he has studied in depth the published research on the fossil record and genetic aspects of human evolution. His clear description of how our species evolved, and how this accounts for unique human characteristics, is peerless. I found his treatment fascinating and deeply rewarding."
—**Doulas Futuyma**, Stony Brook University

"An entertaining and informative exploration of the evolutionary journey that led to us."
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"How modern humans evolved is among the most scientifically interesting—and the most socially contentious—topics in all of science. Drawing on the full toolkit of contemporary evolutionary biology, Mitch Cruzan's *Looking Down the Tree* offers a succinct, lively, and provocative account of human evolution."
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