

PREFACE

This book provides an explanation of the main ideas and concepts central to biology. It does not set out to give an exhaustive list of obscure technical terms. A decision has been taken to select a range of basic terms that are likely to meet the needs of most readers. The entries cover not only the traditional subject areas, but also the more popular options and many of the topics that form the distinctive parts of human and social biology study.

Each item starts with a simple, one-line definition and progresses to explain the term in a little more detail, showing how it relates to other, associated areas of biology. A conscious effort has been made to form a balance between providing a simple explanation that might be understood by someone encountering the term for the first time and producing an entry that is sufficiently detailed to meet the requirements of more advanced readers. There is an extensive system of cross-referencing. *Italics* have been used to identify terms that have separate entries.

The *Dictionary of Biology* is essentially a book to pick up and put down; a book to browse through and use to add to your understanding of basic ideas. It is also a book that will enable you to clarify your understanding when meeting new ideas.

— Bill Indge