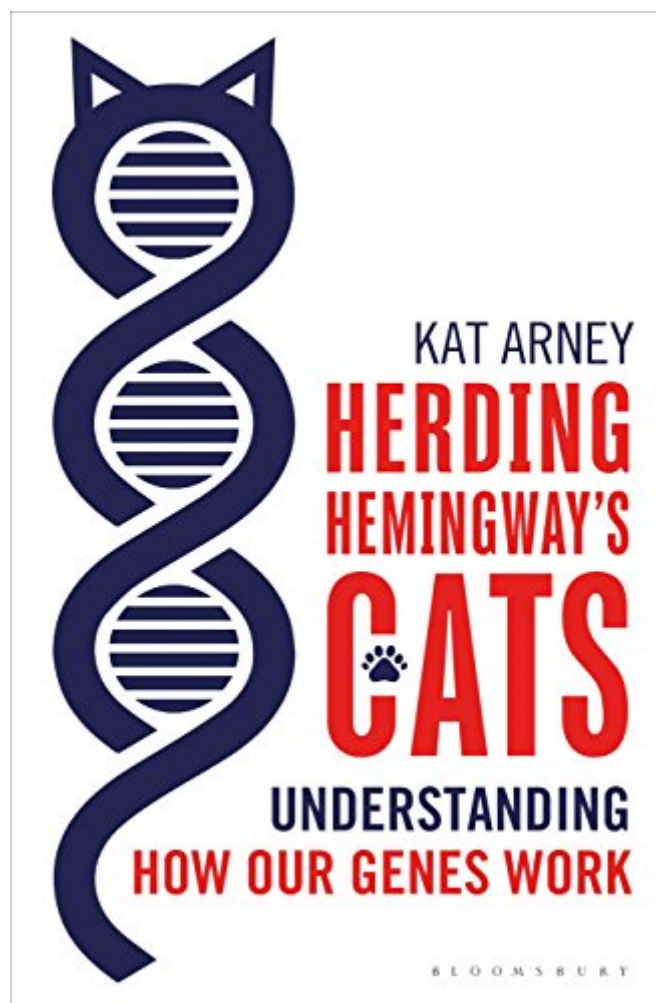


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Herding Hemingway's Cats: Understanding How Our Genes Work (Bloomsbury Sigma)



Synopsis

The language of genes has become common parlance. We know they make your eyes blue, your hair curly or your nose straight. The media tells us that our genes control the risk of cancer, heart disease, alcoholism or Alzheimer's. The cost of DNA sequencing has plummeted from billions of pounds to a few hundred, and gene-based advances in medicine hold huge promise. So we've all heard of genes, but how do they actually work? There are 2.2 metres of DNA inside every one of your cells, encoding roughly 20,000 genes. These are the 'recipes' that tell our cells how to make the building blocks of life, along with myriad control switches ensuring they're turned on and off at the right time and in the right place. But rather than a static string of genetic code, this is a dynamic, writhing biological library. Figuring out how it all works – “how your genes build your body” – is a major challenge for researchers around the world. And what they're discovering is that far from genes being a fixed, deterministic blueprint, things are much more random and wobbly than anyone expected. Drawing on stories ranging from six-toed cats and stickleback hips to Mickey Mouse mice and zombie genes – “told by researchers working at the cutting edge of genetics” – Kat Arney explores the mysteries in our genomes with clarity, flair and wit, creating a companion reader to the book of life itself.

Book Information

File Size: 793 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury Sigma; 1 edition (January 14, 2016)

Publication Date: January 14, 2016

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B015RKFCPK

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #96,670 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #29 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Science > Genetics #77 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Science > Evolution #139 in Books > Medical Books > Basic Sciences > Genetics

Customer Reviews

A witty and insightful review of our knowledge of genetics and our lack thereof. Kat Arney, a former genetics researcher herself, interviews Nobel Prize winners and other prominent researchers to bring us the latest in genetics "straight from the horse's mouth.". Each chapter is an interview with some prominent researcher who has some unique finding in the field. The general aim of the book, it seems to me, is to correct widespread misunderstandings, such as the genotype determines the phenotype. If you are interested in genetics, read this book. You are in for a treat.

Excellent book. Ideal for someone with a basic scientific background who is not working in genetics and wants to be brought up to date on our current understanding of the topic. Other reviewers have mentioned that it is bright, witty, and engaging. It is. The writing style makes the hours spent developing an understanding of the topic far more enjoyable than reading the scientific papers and text books from which this kind of understanding must normally be extracted. The study of DNA and RNA has advanced rapidly over the last decade. Information more than a couple of years old is dubious and the language of microbiology is something only a mother could love. Kat provides an easy to understand account of where we are today and perhaps most importantly the limits of what we know, which you might find surprising. That broad overview is frequently brought to light through first hand conversations with leading researchers. I've been studying genetics recently and feel that I got a more cohesive overview from this book than I did from the previous 6 months of plowing through traditional resources. If you want to know more about the spaghetti analogy you'll need to read the book :).

This was an interesting review of what we know about genetics so far and it is a really complicated subject. While I really enjoyed the subject matter and the numerous interviews with different leading scientists in the field, I was not a fan of how everything was presented. It was very informal and had several asides that took away from the overall discussion. And as fascinating as I found the interviews, they got repetitive after a few. While I enjoyed reading this, I can see the layman reader getting blindsided by the science with all the detailed descriptions of the mechanisms and molecules involved. I would recommend it to people who know a little about genetics and want to dig a bit deeper into the subject while not dedicating lots of time to studying the subject. *I received an eARC of this book from the publisher via Netgalley

Herding Hemingway's Cat's is impressive in its scope and accessibility. Arney is a science

communicator whose broadcasting I have followed for some time, and this is an excellent introduction for the layperson to the expanding realm of genetics. She shows us how we got to where we are now and what the prospects for the future of genetics are. Genetics is far from my own field, but understanding it is essential to being a responsibly informed citizen participating in political discussions surrounding new gene-manipulating technologies, perhaps the most powerful, potentially transformative tool science has yet put in our hands. This book is a great place to start building your vocabulary so you can participate in those discussions. Any interested high school student would be able to follow it. Highly recommended.

I'm a biology professor and reading Kat Arney's book is giving me great ideas and resources to use in my genetics class. Her focus on how genes and genomes WORK is something that's missing from most textbooks. She communicates complicated topics in a clear, clever way that I think would be very accessible to introductory-level biology students. I'm not sure I would recommend the book for someone with no biology background...some basic knowledge of DNA, transcription, and translation are necessary to understand the most important points. But I strongly recommend the book for anyone looking to bring their understanding of genetics up to date.

Great Book. Highly recommended This book through numerous vignettes discusses the latest developments in the fascinating world of genetics. It is very well written and is easy to understand I was enthralled and read the book in one sitting.

While it might be a little daunting to some without lab or chemistry knowledge, it is very informative. If you ever had an interest in DNA infrastructure and how it works, here it is. Well worth the read.

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