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by Jonathan Wells Ph.D. (Author)

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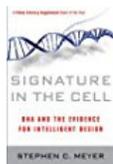
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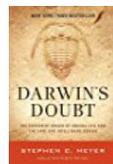
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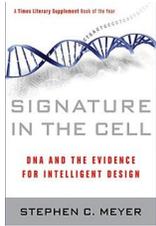
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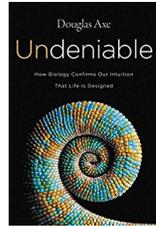
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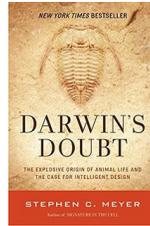
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About the Author

Jonathan Wells has received two Ph.D.s, one in Molecular and Cell Biology from the University of California at Berkeley, and one in Religious Studies from Yale University. He has worked as a postdoctoral research biologist at the University of California at Berkeley and the supervisor of a medical laboratory in Fairfield, California. Dr. Wells is also the author of *Charles Hodge's Critique of Darwinism* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), *Icons of Evolution: Why much of what we teach about evolution is wrong* (Regnery Publishing, 2000), and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design* (Regnery, 2006).

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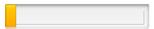
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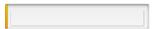
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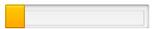
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 **Another "Icon" of Darwinian Evolution Bites the Dust**

By [Erasmus](#) on April 29, 2011

Format: Paperback

In recent years, a number of leading boosters of Neo-Darwinism have claimed that much of our genome is filled with functionless "junk DNA." They go on to claim that this "junk DNA" provides definitive proof that the genome is the product of a blind and undirected Darwinian process rather than purposeful (intelligent) design.

But what if so-called "junk DNA" is not junk at all? In this meticulously documented book, molecular

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biologist Jonathan Wells (previous author of [Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth? Why Much of What We Teach About Evolution Is Wrong](#)) presents a growing flood of research that is showing the widespread functionality of DNA previously dismissed by leading Darwinists as little more than genetic garbage. For non-scientists, some of the detail provided here may be tough-sledding. But Wells does his best to make things clear even for those who may not have a detailed understanding of modern genetics, and his book includes a helpful glossary of key terms as well as 17 black and white illustrations. Chapter 9 provides a useful (and understandable!) summary of the case for functionality in "junk DNA." For scientifically-inclined readers, Wells' careful distillation in Chapters 3-8 of hundreds of recent journal articles documenting various functions for so-called "junk DNA" will be extremely valuable.

Apart from the cutting-edge science contained here, this book will be eye-opening to many people for exposing in Chapter 2 just how outdated and slipshod many "leading" evolutionists have been in their claims about "junk DNA," including figures like Francis Collins, Jerry Coyne at the University of Chicago, John Avise at the University of California, Philip Kitcher at Columbia University, Ken Miller at Brown University, and Michael Shermer at Scientific American.



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||| | A Primer on Science v. Rhetoric

By [Fritz R. Ward](#) on May 3, 2011

Format: Paperback | [Verified Purchase](#)

As exploration began to reveal the full extent of the human genome in the 1970s, it was discovered, much to the shock of early researchers, that only a small portion of our DNA served explicitly to fold proteins. What did the rest of it do? More than a few researchers proposed that most of our genome was "junk," relics of an evolutionary past that served no current function. Despite the caution of some geneticists, who wisely suggested that junk DNA was merely a category representing the limits of our understanding, several self-proclaimed spokesmen for science pounced on the idea that junk DNA was in fact proof that popular alternatives to Darwinian evolution were simply wrong. Like an earlier generation of biologists who harped on "vestigial" organs as a proof against design, writers such as Richard Dawkins, Michael Shermer, Francis Collins, Jerry Coyne, Douglas Futuyama, Philip Kitchner, and Kenneth Miller picked up the argument for junk DNA as part of their rhetorical arsenal against Intelligent Design. As this book illustrates, however, they were premature in doing so. Much of what was originally thought to be "junk" in fact serves a purpose.

The bulk of Well's latest book is a summation of hundreds of articles dealing with the non protein coding portions of DNA. Indeed, the small print endnotes to the book make up more than a quarter of its total pages. But in general, Wells finds two lines of evidence that these DNA sequences are indeed functional. The first is that these sequences are ultra conserved, both in humans and other animals. If they were truly non-functional, we would expect that they would gradually deteriorate and be subject to a greater number of mutations than the DNA which we know to be functional. But in fact, this is not the case. This line of evidence, of course, is indirect. But a more direct line of evidence is found in the number of positive functions that have been uncovered. Apparently repetitive sequences of DNA, for example, serve to deactivate one of the two X chromosomes in female mammals to promote healthy development. Other functions, including RNA coding, are common.

Taken as a whole, this book is a useful summary of the current literature. But what does this mean for the wider reading public? Does this book "prove" intelligent design? Actually no. Indeed, as Wells openly acknowledges, most of the articles written against the notion of junk DNA are written by biologists who accept the paradigm of evolution. Indeed, a major source of the argument against junk DNA lies in the power of natural selection. For Wells, the main point to be taken from this exercise is that many of the spokesmen for "science" actually have an agenda that includes a religious argument. "Junk DNA" is part of the popular literature on the subject not because it was a well established concept. It is part of popular discourse because several biologists hoped they could use it as a weapon against intelligent design. This suggests they had motives other than strictly examining the evidence.

But there is another sense in which the story of "Junk DNA" (or rather, the story of how it was widely

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Balanced, with good review of molecular bio. Since its publication in 2011, plenty of science now to back-up Wells' book.

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accepted and then gradually rejected) is in fact devastating to the Darwinian paradigm. Junk DNA was an important "proof" for many defenders of "science" that evolution was "true." And yet, one of the main arguments against the whole concept of junk DNA is that it is not compatible with what we know of natural selection. In other words, Darwinian evolution is at once proved both by the presence and absence of junk DNA. And given that is the case, falsifying Darwinian evolution is nearly inconceivable. In the final analysis, real science can be falsified, but ideologies cannot.

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||| Expertly written, yummy food for thought

By [Harrison Koehli](#) on April 29, 2012

Format: Paperback

I picked this one up after reading Bryant Shiller's [Origin of Life: The 5th Option](#). If you haven't read it, Shiller has some VERY interesting theories about evolution, the origins of life, and junk DNA in particular. (The 'fifth' option is to distinguish his ideas from abiogenesis, random and directed panspermia, and creationism - he's clearly no theist.) Among other things, he predicts that 'junk' DNA will have large portions conserved between species, will not degrade over time due to random mutations, and have features similar to language. So, I wanted to check out if his ideas were possible. A quick search turned up this one, so I ordered it and read it in a day or two, not really knowing what to expect.

Well, first of all, I didn't know the author was a proponent of 'intelligent design'. So that was something of a surprise when I first cracked the book's pages. However, for those who might be turned off of the book for this simple fact, I think that the majority of the book will be appreciated by anyone simply interested in the topic. Except for a few parts where he states his thoughts on ID and problems with neo-Darwinism (some of which I actually agree with), his main purpose is simply to summarize the latest research into 'non-coding' DNA. And he does a great job at that. The chapters are clearly written, concise, well-organized, and fascinating to the extreme. You'll be left with no doubt that junk DNA is no junk and that DNA in general is more complex and mysterious than you ever thought (well, that was my reaction!).

The book is structured as a response to several prominent neo-Darwinists' thoughts on junk DNA: that it is largely 'junk' and that this proves that neo-Darwinism is correct. He quotes the likes of Dawkins and Shermer (among others), and proceeds to rip them to shreds. He's largely successful, as their statements border on the absurd. Perhaps due to the length of the book (only about 110 pages plus about 50 pages of footnotes), he doesn't really provide a good argument for ID, and all he ends up showing is that Dawkins and Shermer are more than a little moronic at times. (No small wonder there.) So I don't think this book will sway anyone's opinions, depending on which side of the fence they stand, but it DOES make a good introduction to non-coding DNA and its various functions, some of which might just blow your mind.

And I should mention, in regard to Shiller's book, that I came away with the conclusion that while things may not be as simple as he suggests, I don't see anything in the latest research to invalidate his ideas...

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