



# **An Elusive Victorian: The Evolution of Alfred Russel Wallace**

*Martin Fichman*

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Codiscoverer of the theory of evolution by natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace should be recognized as one of the titans of Victorian science. Instead he has long been relegated to a secondary place behind Darwin. Worse, many scholars have overlooked or even mocked his significant contributions to other aspects of Victorian culture. With *An Elusive Victorian*, Martin Fichman provides the first comprehensive analytical study of Wallace's life and controversial intellectual career.

Fichman examines not only Wallace's scientific work as an evolutionary theorist and field naturalist but also his philosophical concerns, his involvement with theism, and his commitment to land nationalization and other sociopolitical reforms such as women's rights. As Fichman shows, Wallace worked throughout his life to integrate these humanistic and scientific interests. His goal: the development of an evolutionary cosmology, a unified vision of humanity's place in nature and society that he hoped would ensure the dignity of all individuals.

To reveal the many aspects of this compelling figure, Fichman not only reexamines Wallace's published works, but also probes the contents of his lesser known writings, unpublished correspondence, and copious annotations in books from his personal library. Rather than consider Wallace's science as distinct from his sociopolitical commitments, *An Elusive Victorian* assumes a mutually beneficial relationship between the two, one which shaped Wallace into one of the most memorable characters of his time. Fully situating Wallace's wide-ranging work in its historical and cultural context, Fichman's innovative and insightful account will interest historians of science, religion, and Victorian culture as well as biologists.

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