



Lonely Planets: The Natural Philosophy of Alien Life

By David Grinspoon

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Lonely Planets: The Natural Philosophy of Alien Life By David Grinspoon

It's been nearly four decades since Carl Sagan first addressed the general public from a scientist's perspective, confronting the possibility of extraterrestrial life. David Grinspoon, a planetary scientist who has helped to shape modern planetary exploration, brings the subject to a new generation of readers with his reflections on the most recent developments in astrobiology, including NASA's search for life on Mars. In *Lonely Planets*, he investigates the big questions: How widespread are life and intelligence in the cosmos? Is life on Earth an accident or in some sense the "purpose" of this universe? And how can we, working from the Earth-centric definition of "life," even begin to think about the varieties of life-forms on other planets?

Using the topic of extraterrestrial life as a mirror with which to view human beliefs, evolution, history, and aspirations, Grinspoon provides an authoritative scientific narrative of cosmic evolution, along with provocative ruminations on how we fit into the story of the universe. An accessible, lively blend of science, history, philosophy, and personal narrative, *Lonely Planets* reveals how the search for extraterrestrial life unites our spiritual and scientific quests for connection with the cosmos.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In *Lonely Planets*, astronomer David Grinspoon is buoyantly optimistic about the possibility that we are not alone in the universe. Grinspoon, who serves as principal scientist in the Department of Space Studies at the Southwest Research Institute, lays out a detailed but not boring case for life on other planets, dropping authoritative quotes and goofy footnotes in equal measure. The Grinspoon family hung out with Carl Sagan and other astronomical royalty, giving young David an early appreciation for SETI and the heady astrobiological theorizing of the 1970s. In the 21st century, scientists are still split on the question of extraterrestrial life. Grinspoon believes that a "natural philosophy" approach is the key to furthering our knowledge in this field, since there is precious little evidence with which to apply the scientific method. Instead of looking for the familiar and testable, he writes, we should expect the unexpected.

Expecting to find DNA elsewhere is like expecting a *Star Trek* universe with humanoid aliens who speak English and insist that we join them for dinner at eight.

Lonely Planets is a substantial book, covering the origins of life on Earth as well as the changes in religious and social thought that have affected astronomers' search for other planets and their theoretical inhabitants. Grinspoon's style is exuberant, even a little cocky, and the result is delightful readability. *Lonely Planets* lets readers share the dismay of finding out there are probably no Martians and the thrill of wondering if there might be Europeans. "I think our galaxy is full of species," writes Grinspoon. "The wise ones are out there waiting for us to join them." --*Therese Littleton*

From Publishers Weekly

Principal scientist at the Southwest Research Institute's department of space science, Grinspoon offers an up-to-date picture of the search for extraterrestrial life and the prospects of finding it in a universe that we now know contains other solar systems. It also covers the nearly four centuries that the search has been under way since the initial observations of Renaissance astronomers. As soon as biology joined the inquiring minds, theories multiplied thick and fast; the historiography of the scientific debate is complex and has the potential for being unbearably dull. But Grinspoon handles the wide variety of material necessary for a coherent narrative with great aplomb, marshalling material such as the charming *Conversations*, a 17th-century dialogue by a French astronomer in which a philosopher and a marquise debate astronomical topics. Even when he turns to physics, the author runs to phrases like "the Sun in its wild youth" to describe the energy output of various kinds of stars, making this book less a popularization than a personable chat on life, the universe and everything.

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From Scientific American

As he tells engagingly the story of humankind's long fascination with the possibility of extraterrestrial life, Grinspoon ponders the impact of a first contact in the form of a radio message from an intelligent civilization. "It might be frightening, liberating, uplifting, disturbing, or all of the above, but I say, 'Bring it on.'" And what if the first form of extraterrestrial life to be discovered turns out to be microbes? It "would enlarge our kingdom." Grinspoon, principal scientist in the department of space studies at the Southwest Research Institute and adjunct professor of astrophysical and planetary sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder, concludes with his own belief: "I think our galaxy is full of species who have crawled up from the slime of their home worlds, evolved self-awareness and started to tinker, passed beyond the threat of technological self-extermination, and transcended their animal origins to move out into the

cosmos."

Editors of Scientific American

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Anthony Pisano:

This book untitled *Lonely Planets: The Natural Philosophy of Alien Life* to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this publication you can get a lot of benefit upon it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book store or you can order it via online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quickly to read this book, since you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason for you to past this guide from your list.

John Wannamaker:

Lonely Planets: The Natural Philosophy of Alien Life can be one of your nice books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to set every word into joy arrangement in writing *Lonely Planets: The Natural Philosophy of Alien Life* however doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest as well as based confirm resource info that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial contemplating.

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