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Alfred Russel Wallace in the Amazon: Footsteps in the Forest

Sandra Knapp

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A fascinating account of naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace's 1848 expedition to the Amazon

Alfred Russel Wallace spent almost two years traveling up the Rio Negro, a region few Europeans had explored, collecting natural history specimens. A fire onboard the ship during the return journey to England destroyed all of his collections, but among the possessions rescued was a collection of sketches of fish, later presented to the Natural History Museum. This book describes the naturalist in the making, the tragic loss of Wallace's collections, and how this affected his future. His research ultimately led him (in parallel with Darwin) to one of the biggest and most controversial ideas of the 19th century—evolution by natural selection—and his understanding of this process certainly began in the Amazon. Wallace's Amazonian adventure is recounted using his own words where possible, and illustrated throughout with his delicate pencil drawings. The story is interwoven with the author's current experience of tropical field work and is told in a lively, informal style.

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