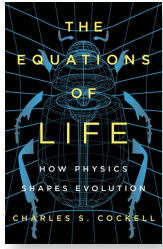


***The Equations of Life* by Charles S. Cockell**



Why don't animals have wheels? Why are burrowing moles similar shapes wherever they are found in the world? These are examples of the questions Charles Cockell asks in this book. Cockell had the idea for this book when asked to teach an astrobiology course to physics undergraduates. Not wanting to leave out the biology side, he started thinking about examples from life which illustrate various physical equations. This book is a delightfully organized argument that the realm of large-scale biology is governed by the much smaller world of physics. While many of you who work on protein structures and bindings are well aware of this,

I had not previously considered this when thinking about the shape of a ladybug. Indeed, the author relates one of the projects he sets his students, which is to describe as many of the forces which govern the design of the ladybird as possible.

Cockell's enthusiasm for this topic is obvious (particularly for the moles) and his writing style is engaging. The content is accessible to a wide audience, I found the explanations of the physics equations, for which I have no background in, simple enough to understand. Likewise, the biological aspects were similarly explained. The work is well referenced should you find yourself interested in digging deeper. *The Equations of Life* is an easy and educational read for those of you looking for something a bit different.

Nicholas Walker

(Biochemical Society/Portland Press, UK)