

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910962859403321
Autore	Roff Derek A
Titolo	Evolutionary Quantitative Genetics / / by Derek A. Roff
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New York, NY : , : Springer US : , : Imprint : Springer, , 1997
ISBN	1-4615-4080-1
Edizione	[1st ed. 1997.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (XVI, 494 p.)
Disciplina	576.5
Soggetti	Evolution (Biology) Medical genetics Evolutionary Biology Medical Genetics
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
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Sommario/riassunto

The impetus for this book arose out of my previous book, *The Evolution of Life Histories* (Roff, 1992). In that book I presented a single chapter on quantitative genetic theory. However, as the book was concerned with the evolution of life histories and traits connected to this, the presence of quantitative genetic variation was an underlying theme throughout. Much of the focus was placed on optimality theory, for it is this approach that has proven to be extremely successful in the analysis of life history variation. But quantitative genetics cannot be ignored, because there are some questions for which optimality approaches are inappropriate; for example, although optimality modeling can address the question of the maintenance of phenotypic variation, it cannot say anything about genetic variation, on which further evolution clearly depends. The present book is, thus, a natural extension of the first. I have approached the problem not from the point of view of an animal or plant breeder but from that of one interested in understanding the evolution of quantitative traits in wild populations. The subject is large with a considerable body of theory: I generally present the assumptions underlying the analysis and the results, giving the relevant references for those interested in the intervening mathematics. My interest is in what quantitative genetics tells me about evolutionary processes; therefore, I have concentrated on areas of research most relevant to field studies.