Migration mumbles

Migration and Colonization in Human Microevolution
by Alan G. Fix
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H ow shall we think of human migration? Is it useful to think of famous travelers, such as Christopher Columbus and Sacagawea, as migrants? Both played pivotal roles in the movement of people to the Americas and within North America, respectively. However, as far as we know, both returned from their travels without leaving any offspring along the way. But, surely we appreciate the role of the hippocampal formation in the evolution of cognitive architecture. Science 293, 893–896

The benefits of an adaptationist approach are probably most evident in chapters that cover spatial learning, food-storing and song learning in birds, although some researchers are likely to dispute her assertion that there is little, if any, unambiguous evidence that any animal uses a cognitive map10. Shettleworth realizes her goal, perhaps most successfully, in a chapter on foraging and the measurement of rates, where behavioral ecologists and psychologists are well under way to a truly integrated approach to the study of behavior14. In general, the deficiencies of the book point to opportunities for future research.

The study of cognition and the neurological foundations of behavior have no doubt already benefited from an adaptationist perspective, but interest in behavioral variation, our primary indicator of potential distinctive cognitive processes, is sometimes forfeited to neuroscience9. Shettleworth envisions a truly integrative channel for this vision.

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