GREYHOUND NATION

Edmund Russell’s much-anticipated new book examines the coevolution of people and domestic animals. Using greyhounds and their owners in England from 1200 to 1900 as a case study, Russell shows that history and evolution are two names for the same process: evolution in domestic animals was a historical process, and human history was an evolutionary process. Challenging the popular notion that animal breeds remain uniform over time and space, Russell shows that greyhounds varied and changed just as much as their owners. Some changes were physical and others cultural. People and dogs alike evolved in response to the forces of modernization, such as capitalism, democracy, and industry. They also evolved in response to each other. Human history and animal evolution were not separate processes, each proceeding at its own rate according to its own rules. They intertwined in subtle and fascinating ways.

Edmund Russell is Professor of History at Boston University, where he focuses his research on environmental history, the history of technology, US history, and biology. He is the author of *Evolutionary History: Uniting History and Biology to Understand Life on Earth* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) and coeditor of the Cambridge Studies in Environment and History series.
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(continued after Index)
GREYHOUND NATION

A Coevolutionary History of England, 1200–1900

Edmund Russell

Boston University
For my siblings,

MARY, CATHERINE, PATRICK, ELIZABETH, SUSAN,
VIRGINIA, AND MICHAEL.
Whoever would write the history of dogs must write the history of man.

Hugh Dalziel, 1888
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 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was a puppy that matured into a bigger dog than I expected. I was originally writing a book about working-class dogs in England. Authors in the nineteenth century described whippets as “the poor man’s greyhound.” To understand that description, a chapter on greyhounds seemed necessary. When I dug into greyhound history, I realized that the most fundamental assumptions of breed histories are mistaken. Historians often portray breeds of animals, and varieties of plants, as uniform, isolated, and static. My research convinced me that isolated, uniform breeds were a recent development. Before the nineteenth century, breeds lived in porous, diverse populations. Projecting today’s ideas about breeds onto the past obscured some of the most important features of animal history. An effort to tell a more accurate story, and to demonstrate how evolution and history are two facets of the same coin, led to the book in your hands.

Audiences at the University of British Columbia, Juniata College, Virginia Tech, University of Kansas, University of Oklahoma, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge University, University of Virginia, Royal Institute of Technology (Stockholm), University of Michigan, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the annual meeting of the American Society for Environmental History heard presentations of portions of this paper. My gratitude goes to audience members for helpful comments.

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This book builds on the work of many scholars but owes a special debt to Harriet Ritvo. By grounding animal history in social history, she helped inspire my approach and led me to sources. Other scholars also had a significant impact on the framework developed in this book. P. B. Munsche and Emma Griffin influenced my thinking about hunting. Charles Darwin and Stephen Palumbi helped me understand evolution under domestication. William Durham shaped my ideas about cultural evolution and coevolution. Charles Elton, G. Evelyn Hutchinson, Maurits Ertsen, and F. J. Odling-Smee helped me develop ideas about niche construction.

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Credit for the idea of studying canines goes to our dog, Riley. I was thinking about evolutionary history one day when, as I stood with him in our driveway, I realized that his ilk provided a splendid case study. Riley was, literally, my companion throughout the project. He lived eighteen energetic years and died one month before I completed the manuscript. We miss him.

As always, the advice and support of my wife, Lucy, made this work possible.

Thank you.