



Lords of the Fly: Drosophila Genetics and the Experimental Life

Robert E. Kohler

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The common fruit fly, *Drosophila*, has long been one of the most productive of all laboratory animals. From 1910 to 1940, the center of *Drosophila* culture in America was the school of Thomas Hunt Morgan and his students Alfred Sturtevant and Calvin Bridges. They first created "standard" flies through inbreeding and by organizing a network for exchanging stocks of flies that spread their practices around the world.

In *Lords of the Fly*, Robert E. Kohler argues that fly laboratories are a special kind of ecological niche in which the wild fruit fly is transformed into an artificial animal with a distinctive natural history. He shows that the fly was essentially a laboratory tool whose startling productivity opened many new lines of genetic research. Kohler also explores the moral economy of the "Drosophilists": the rules for regulating access to research tools, allocating credit for achievements, and transferring authority from one generation of scientists to the next.

By closely examining the Drosophilists' culture and customs, Kohler reveals essential features of how experimental scientists do their work.



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