

## Editorial

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Welcome to this Special Issue of *Evolution: Education and Outreach* devoted to human evolution, under the able Guest Editorship of Dr. Will Harcourt-Smith. We are exceptionally proud of this issue, as it melds state-of-the-art scientific analysis of human evolution with lucid writing, thus bringing our entire readership closer to what we feel is the single most important issue in evolutionary biology: the explanation of who we ourselves—our species *Homo sapiens*—are and where we came from.

It was Charles Darwin, building on the work of a few bold predecessors, who first persuaded the thinking world to take seriously the possibility that life had evolved through natural processes. And though he only dared suggest, at the very end of *On the Origin of Species*, that “light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history,” his earlier notebooks make it clear that Darwin had thought all along that humans had evolved together with the rest of the world’s living species, from the moment he became convinced of the fact of “transmutation” back in the 1830s. Yet his diffident comment about human evolution in the *Origin* reveals his certain knowledge that many of his contemporaries were sure to be offended by the suggestion that we humans share a common ancestry with other Primates—and, going back further, with every form of life that has lived on Earth over the past 3.5+ billion years.

Today, the notion that humans have indeed evolved naturally still remains controversial among creationists—and the educational problems their opposition to teaching evolution have caused boils down, at its heart, to an insistence that human beings simply cannot have evolved along with the rest of the living world. The papers in this issue, in stark contrast, reveal the stunning amount of evidence—from fossils, comparative anatomy, and genetics—that make the overwhelming case for the evolution of humans right along with every other species on the planet.

But, as Darwin also remarked, there is a “grandeur” to this view of life. We feel this grandeur applies especially to the recognition that we ourselves are parts of the natural universe, as this issue makes so abundantly and beautifully clear. The story of human evolution is our candidate for the “greatest story ever told.”

We have many more special issues planned and in the works. All will be aiming to connect the educational world more closely to the realm of evolutionary science. Please keep submitting your articles (and ideas for Special Issues) that will contribute to this central mission of *Evolution: Education and Outreach*. It has been a joy for us to see the journal grow, mature, and fulfill its vital role of scientific outreach and education.

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