

but Darwin himself provides many of the fundamentals. Importantly, at several points in the book, Darwin notes that if something were to be observed it would be fatal to his theory; this is falsifiable science.

In one chapter, Darwin turns to the evolution of instincts. One thing here is of particular importance: he lays no claim to understand the origin of instinct, just its

evolution. The same goes for life itself, the origin of which he only briefly speculates on in his final chapter. For this is a book on the origin of species, and Darwin maintains throughout his focus on how species arise and change. Nor does he specifically look at the place of humans in the view of nature that he proposes. The consequences for humans, however, would have been acutely

apparent to his original audience, and it is a testament to Darwin's influence if they seem somewhat less dramatic to the modern reader. □

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Cause for celebration

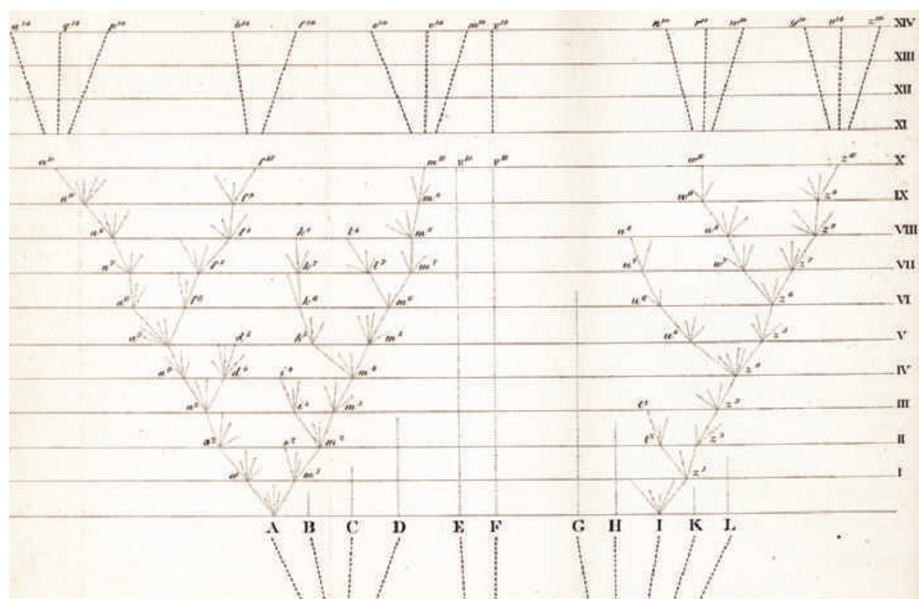
ANNIVERSARY

In this anniversary year of Charles Darwin's birth and the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (200 and 150 years, respectively), there are celebrations aplenty — from the National Museum of Australia to the State Darwin Museum in Moscow, from Tokyo to Alexandria. Exhibitions, talks,

conferences, festivals, concerts, scientific events and debates have been put together all over the globe, to illuminate the profound impact that Darwin's theory of evolution has had in areas as diverse as biology, politics, agriculture, economics, medicine and art.

Not surprisingly, most of the events take place in the UK (www.darwin200.org), in particular around Shrewsbury, Cambridge, Edinburgh, London and Kent, which were all places of significance in Darwin's life. Shrewsbury, Darwin's birthplace — on 12 February 1809, at Mount House — celebrates its most famous son every year with the Darwin Festival. This year the celebrations are extended throughout 2009, the events including numerous lectures and exhibitions on Darwin's life and ideas, which have also inspired a lasting memorial entitled *Quantum Leap*, to be unveiled later this year.

Similar festivals are being hosted throughout the country, not least in Cambridge, where Darwin studied theology between 1827 and 1831, and became interested in botany and natural history. The Cambridge Science Festival (www.admin.cam.ac.uk/sciencefestival/) runs from 11 to 22 March, followed on 5 July by Darwin 2009 (<http://www.darwin2009.cam.ac.uk/>) — a week-long festival including more than 100 talks, debates, workshops, performances, exhibitions and films exploring Darwin's influence on science, society, literature, history, philosophy, theology, art and music. *Endless Forms*, at Cambridge's Fitzwilliam



Museum from 16 June to 4 October, is a ground-breaking, cross-disciplinary exhibition exploring the importance of visual imagery in the development of Darwin's ideas, featuring works by Turner, Degas and Monet, among many others.

A more hands-on experience is provided at Down House, Downe, Kent, Darwin's home from 1842 until his death in 1882. It was there he developed his theory of evolution by natural selection, through wildlife observation and scientific experiments in his garden and the surrounding countryside. Nominated for World Heritage Status (www.darwinatdowne.co.uk/), the house survives almost unaltered since Darwin's time, and the grounds have been restored to show many of his experiments in their original settings.

The tour-de-force of Darwin retrospectives is *Darwin: Big Idea, Big Exhibition*, at the Natural History Museum in London. Co-organized with the American Museum of Natural History, New York,

the Museum of Science, Boston, The Field Museum, Chicago, and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, the exhibition travelled to each of these venues before its arrival in London in late 2008. It retraces Darwin's life-changing journey aboard HMS *Beagle*, from 1831 to 1836, which took him around the world and to the Galapagos Islands. It was during that voyage that Darwin obtained the first clues to the idea of evolution by natural selection. The exhibition provides a rare insight into the development of his ideas, through notebooks, artefacts, personal belongings and the fossils and zoological specimens he collected on his travels. It also includes the pages from his 1837 notebook on which he drew the 'tree of life' — which evolved into the structure pictured above, from *On the Origin of Species* (John Murray, 1859) — describing the relationships between groups of organisms, and perhaps the perfect encapsulation of Darwin's big idea. □

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