

28 January 2009

For Release: IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT

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DARWIN TURNS 200, THE "ORIGIN" 150!

Thursday 12th February is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin, and "Darwin Day" worldwide. California State University, Fresno faculty and students, from multiple disciplines, are delighted to join in this global event. This year's celebration on the Fresno State campus will continue through 22nd November, 2009, which marks the 150th anniversary of the publication of "On the Origin of Species..." Darwin's genius in formulating the Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection remains one of the greatest contributions to science of the past 200 years.

Scientists and others at CSU Fresno will begin our local celebration of these historic occasions with two events on the Fresno State campus.

At 5:00 p.m. on Thursday 12th February CSU Fresno faculty will announce the formation of an interdisciplinary campus group devoted to the study of evolutionary topics from multiple scholarly perspectives. A reception celebrating the founding of this newly formed Consortium for Evolutionary Studies will be held at the Downing Planetarium Museum on the CSU Fresno campus. Members of the group will discuss their interests in evolutionary theory and host a reception celebrating the life and work of Charles Darwin and the formation of the consortium. The consortium includes faculty and students from several colleges and departments at CSU Fresno. They are dedicated to the promotion of evolutionary theory, science and reason. Interested parties will be able to discuss the continued significance of Darwin's ideas, and plans for further events throughout the year will be announced. Refreshments will be served, and the event is open to all.

On Friday 13th February at 3:00 p.m. in Science 2, Room 109, a faculty panel will invite questions from the audience regarding Darwin's ideas and the societal impact of evolutionary biology. The panel will be composed of faculty from CSU Fresno, including Dr. Paul Crosbie (Biology), Dr. Andrew Fiala (Director of the Ethics Center at CSU Fresno), Dr. Jim Mullooly (Anthropology), Dr. Mike Botwin (Psychology), and primate ecologist and anthropologist Dr. Kaberi Kar Gupta. All are welcome to attend this event.

"Darwin's seminal contributions to science and society provide the theoretical and conceptual foundations for all of the biological sciences. His theories continue to be some of the most influential intellectual developments in human history, and have

revolutionized how we interpret the world around us. Consortium members are committed to the accurate dissemination of Darwin's ideas through education and the extension of his ideas through new research in many scholarly areas," said Dr. Paul Crosbie of the Department of Biology.

The Darwin Day Celebration started with one event in 1995. Last year there were more than 850 Darwin Day events that included debates, lectures, essay contests, film festivals, museum exhibits, art shows and even an "Evolution Banquet" with "Primordial Soup" followed by a "Darwin Fish Fry." This year hundreds of groups across the United States and the globe will celebrate "Darwin Day" and the anniversary of the publication of the "Origin." They will honor the discoveries and life of the man who was the first to describe biological evolution through the process of natural selection.

"Darwin Day promotes understanding of evolution and the scientific method," said Larry Jones, president of the Institute for Humanist Studies which administers The Darwin Day Celebration. "This celebration expresses gratitude for the enormous benefit that scientific knowledge has contributed to the advancement of humanity."

The theory of evolution by natural selection was controversial in Darwin's time but was later rapidly accepted worldwide by both scientists and the public. In 2008, the Church of England issued a public apology to Darwin for their "misguided criticism in the 1860's," and will themselves join in enthusiastically with Darwin Day celebrations. However, despite the complete acceptance of Darwin's ideas in the scientific community they continue to be controversial in U.S. society today.

For further information about local events, visit: www.darwinsbulldogs.com

For information about Darwin Day celebrations worldwide, visit: www.DarwinDay.org