

Celebrating our namesake

Specialists from home and abroad prepare to come together in Darwin to recognise a remarkable scientist.

The university is taking part in the worldwide celebrations this year to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of eminent naturalist and father of evolutionary theory Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of his revolutionary work *On the Origin of Species*.

To mark the milestones, CDU and the NT Government are hosting a symposium entitled *Charles Darwin: Shaping our Science, Society and Future*, which will be held at the Darwin Convention Centre from 22 – 24 September 2009.

Charles Darwin's revolutionary theory, *On the Origin of Species*, explains how all living organisms evolve by natural selection over millions of years, dictating that only those most suited to their environment will survive and reproduce to pass on their "advantages" to their offspring.

This theory will form the basis of the Charles Darwin Symposium, a forum designed to stimulate appreciation and debate, and to challenge Darwin's findings by bringing together a range of specialists from around the globe.

The symposium will be divided thematically across three days and program highlights include:



TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER

Opening the program

A welcome reception in the evening will be followed by an introduction to Charles Darwin by world-renowned Darwin specialist Tim Berra, Emeritus Professor of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology at the Ohio State University and author of the recently published *Charles Darwin: The concise story of an extraordinary man*.

WEDNESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER

Brave new world? What is Darwin's legacy in the era of modern medicine and technology-based societies?

This theme will ignite discussion on Darwin's legacy and how it has influenced modern medicine and technology. It will begin by focusing on the human and will discuss how we have adapted and evolved to survive modern-day disease.

A particular highlight will be a presentation by Nobel Laureate Professor Peter Doherty AC, who will explore the interaction between infection and immunity.

Later in the day, the topic will turn to genetics and, in particular, phylogenetics (the evolutionary development and diversification of organisms) as a framework on which to test the hypotheses of evolutionary mechanisms.

The theme will close with a panel discussion on the ethics and future for Darwinian based science.

THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER

Understanding the controversy between Darwinian science and religion, and Social Darwinism and indigenous nations: The origin of socio-political policy.

The morning session will open up for discussion the ethical repercussions of Darwin's evolutionary theory, particularly focusing upon the controversy between Darwinian science and religion. It will further focus on the rise of anti-Darwin forms of religion, anti-religious forms of Darwinism and religious forms of Darwinism, ultimately seeking to answer the question, is there scope for compatibility between science and religion?

The afternoon session will examine how Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and his later work, *The Descent of Man*, were used to construct policies in relation to indigenous peoples.

Social Darwinism was a re-interpretation of Charles Darwin's theories by Herbert Spencer, whose focus was "survival of the fittest". Social Darwinism, "survival of the fittest", became the fabric upon which colonial and modern government policies, legislation, and social controls were constructed.

The speakers in this theme will consider how social Darwinism has impacted on Indigenous Australians in the past and present.

The symposium is free, but prior online registration is required. For the full program, visit W: cdus.edu.au/cds2009.

