

Bio 1M: Speciation (complete)

1 How are species defined?

- Conceptually, we define species as “evolutionary units”:
 - Individuals within a species are evolving together
 - Individuals of different species evolve independently
- It is difficult to make this conceptual definition into a practical definition
 - **Answer:** i.e., one that we can apply to decide how to group organisms into species
 - Life is complex

1.1 Biological species concept

- Biological species are defined by reproductive isolation
- Different biological species either:
 - Don’t breed in nature
 - Breed but fail to produce offspring
 - Produce **inviable** offspring – offspring do not develop to adulthood
 - Produce **sterile** offspring – offspring that cannot themselves reproduce

Mechanisms of isolation

- Mechanisms of isolation are often divided into two classes:
 - **Prezygotic** isolation refers to any mechanism that prevents successful mating
 - **Postzygotic** isolation refers to any mechanism that prevents offspring from producing offspring of their own
 - “Zygote” means a cell formed by the fusion of a sperm and an egg

Mechanism examples

- Pre- or post-?
 - Different malaria parasites breed inside different hosts
 - Different species of doves can nest together, but eggs fail to hatch or chicks fail to grow
 - The offspring of horses and donkeys grow up to be healthy, infertile adults
 - Sea urchin eggs cannot be penetrated by sperm from other species
 - Species of pine trees release and receive pollen at different times of year

Pre- vs. post-zygotic mechanisms

- Which should be adaptively favored?
 - Answer: Pre-zygotic mechanisms mean less wasted effort
 - Answer: Example: it takes a lot of resources for a horse to birth and raise a mule, but there is no long-term fitness benefit

Disadvantages of the biological species concept

- Answer: Doesn't apply to asexual species
- Answer: Not practical for extinct species
- Answer: May be hard to evaluate
 - Answer: What if two populations rarely come into contact because of geographic distance?

1.2 Morphological species concept

- Morphological species are defined to be different if they **look** different
 - Useful for working with fossils, or very diverse groups (e.g., insects)
 - A lot of expertise and experience guides morphospecies decisions
- Disadvantages?
 - Answer: Subjective, prone to disagreements
 - Answer: There are groups that look very similar but can't produce viable offspring
 - Answer: Not clear how definition relates to our conceptual definition of evolutionary units

1.3 Ecological species concept

- An ecological species is a set of related organisms occupying the same ecological **niche**
 - Exploit similar resources
 - Tolerate similar environments
 - Face similar natural enemies
- Commonly used for small things, particularly small asexual things

1.4 Phylogenetic species concept

- A phylogenetic species is a monophyletic group of populations
 - Must not be divisible into smaller species
- A **monophyletic group** is a group *defined by* a single common ancestor
 - All descendants of the ancestor must be in the group

Phylogenetic species concept

- Advantages
 - Well defined (as long as you know what a population is)
 - Broadly applicable
- Disadvantages
 - Hard to estimate phylogenies
 - Requires a lot of information about populations
- Believers in the phylogenetic species concept recognize a *lot* of species

Defining species

- Defining species formally can be very tricky
 - No one way is agreed to be the best
- Usually we know more or less what we mean by a species, though

Generating species

- We believe new species are generated from old species
- One species can gradually evolve into another
 - Comment: We can't say exactly when the switch occurs
- Species can also **diverge**: one species splits into two species

How do species split?

- Genetic isolation
- Genetic divergence
- Which comes first?
 - Answer: Isolation is necessary: with too much gene flow populations can't diverge
 - Answer: There can also be a loop: if species diverge, there can be natural selection for increased isolation
 - * Answer: Don't want to waste resources on less-fit hybrid offspring

2 Species divergence in allopatry

- **Allopatry** refers to organisms living apart from each other
- If two populations are isolated from each other, we would expect that they might diverge. Why?
 - **Answer:** Genetic drift
 - **Answer:** Natural selection
 - * **Answer:** Different environments, or different adaptive mutations
- How can two populations of the same species be isolated from each other?

2.1 Dispersal

- Isolated populations of the same species can develop if some individuals **disperse** (move) to a new area and **colonize** it (establish a new population).
- Since colonizing populations are usually small, we expect founder effects and drift to be particularly important

2.2 Vicariance

- Isolated populations of the same species can develop when a population is split by a geographical or ecological barrier
- Such splits are called **vicariance** events.
 - Rivers change course, mountains appear or disappear, continents split and join
 - When temperature changes, some species may only be able to survive in “refuges”, small, protected parts of their original range

Example: ratites

- The ancestors of today’s ostriches, emus, etc. were isolated when the super-continent of Gondwanaland drifted apart starting about 140 million years ago

3 Species divergence in sympatry

- **Sympatry** refers to organisms living in the same geographic area
- In general, it should be hard for populations of the same species living in sympatry to diverge.

- Answer: Gene flow
- Are there exceptions to this expectation?
 - Answer: Seed crackers?
 - * Answer: We don't really know yet
 - Answer: Hawthorn flies
 - Answer: Soapberry bugs

Divergence by partitioning habitats

- Insects that feed on many different plants may be subject to divergent selection
 - An individual may do most of its feeding on one particular plant
- In some cases, gene flow will prevent divergence
- In other cases, individuals may mate preferentially with individuals with the same host plant, and divergence may occur

Other mechanisms of divergence

- Divergence in sympatry is an exciting field
 - When can disruptive selection overcome gene flow?
 - Is this an important component of how diversity evolves?
- Divergence can also occur when mutation causes genetic incompatibility (see book if you are curious about mechanisms)
 - If two populations are in the same place, but can't produce fertile offspring, they are reproductively isolated
 - In what way are they not isolated?
 - * Answer: They can still compete, and one may drive the other extinct
 - * Answer: Reproductive isolation can *combine with* disruptive selection

4 Reuniting

- What happens when isolated populations come back into contact?
- Usually this happens when a geographic barrier disappears
 - a land bridge forms between an island and the continent
 - a river changes course

4.1 Fusion

- When two isolated populations come into contact, they may **fuse** – go back together
 - Adaptive differences may be small
 - Adaptive differences may be overwhelmed by gene flow

4.2 Reinforcement

- In some cases, hybrid offspring may have low fitness
 - **Answer:** Incompatible alleles
 - **Answer:** Disruptive selection
- In these cases we expect natural selection for traits that **reinforce** the distinction between the two species
 - They avoid mating, using coloration, timing, courtship rituals

4.3 Hybrid zones

- When hybrid offspring are functional, and well-adapted to the overlap zone, there may be a zone where hybrids occur
- *Comment:* In this case, should we consider the species to be different?

4.4 Exclusion

- One species might eliminate the other species, either by competition, or by better success in mating
 - Warblers competing for mates
 - Modern humans

4.5 New species

- There is evidence that in some cases hybridization between related species may lead to creation of new species
 - Some combination of genes from the two species may lead to a new adaptation
 - Sunflower example, p. 516–518

Conclusion

- The diversity we see in the world arises from speciation events; mostly by single species splitting into two
- Species splits typically involve isolation and divergence
 - Isolation can happen allopatrically or sympatrically
 - New species can also sometimes arise from hybridization between related species
- Defining species can be complicated
 - Particularly if we want definitions that include both asexual and sexual species