

Timothy Stephens

Curriculum vitae

Personal summary

I am a computational biologist working on understanding the forces that govern the interactions between organisms in ecologically critical environments, such as coral reefs, and the forces that drive major evolutionary transitions, such as the one that gave rise to the first photosynthetic Eukaryotas.

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Education

2012 – 2015	Bachelor of Biotechnology, Institute for Molecular Bioscience, The University of Queensland
2015 – 2015	Honours, Institute for Molecular Bioscience, The University of Queensland
2016 – 2019	PhD, Institute for Molecular Bioscience, The University of Queensland

Research Experience

2012 – 2013	Undergraduate Research Project, Institute for Molecular Bioscience, The University of Queensland
2013 – 2013	Paid Research Assistant, School of Biological Sciences, The University of Queensland
2014 – 2014	Undergraduate Researcher Project, School of Biological Sciences, The University of Queensland
2015 – 2015	Honours Project, Institute for Molecular Bioscience, The University of Queensland
2016 – 2019	PhD, Institute for Molecular Bioscience, The University of Queensland
2019 – present	Post Doctoral Associate, Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, Rutgers University

Teaching experience

2016 – 2017	Practical Tutor University of Queensland Duties included assisting students with the completion of set questions and marking of assignments.
2018	Head Practical Tutor University of Queensland Duties included designing and developing assessment material for the course and organising marking of assignments.

2020 – 2022 Guest lecturer
 Rutgers University
 Conducted lectures on de novo next-generation sequencing, genome and transcriptome sequencing, and metagenomics in a joint undergraduate and postgraduate course titled Fundamentals of Microbial Genomics. Also assisted in designing and marking student exam questions and students oral presentations.

Professional development

2017 UQ Idea Hub, University of Queensland
 2017 Research Commercialisation Workshop, University of Queensland

Awards and honours

2011 Merit Scholarship for academic achievement, University of Queensland
 2012 Deans Commendation for Academic Excellence (achieved a GPA over 6.6), University of Queensland
 2016 Research Training Program (RTP) scholarship, University of Queensland
 2021 2019 Deans Award for Outstanding Higher Degree by Research Theses, University of Queensland

Select Publications

2022 Bhattacharya D., Etten J. V., Benites L. F., and **Stephens T. G.** Endosymbiotic ratchet accelerates divergence after organelle origin. *Under review in BioEssays*, 2022.

2022 Meng Z., Williams A., Liao P., **Stephens T. G.**, Drury C., Chiles E. N., Su X., Javanmard M., and Bhattacharya D. Development of a portable toolkit to diagnose coral thermal stress. *Scientific Reports*, 12:14398, 2022. [[URL](#)]

2022 Benites L. F., **Stephens T. G.**, and Bhattacharya D. Multiple waves of viral invasions in Symbiodiniaceae algal genomes. *Accepted for publication in Virus Evolution*, 2022. [[Preprint](#)]

2022 *Gabr A., ***Stephens T. G.**, and Bhattacharya D. Loss of key endosymbiont genes may facilitate early host control of the chromatophore in *Paulinella*. *iScience*, 25:104974, 2022. *Co-first authorship [[URL](#)]

2022 **Stephens T. G.**, Lee J., Jeong Y., Yoon H. S., Putnam H. M., Majerova E., and Bhattacharya D. High-quality genome assemblies from key Hawaiian coral species. *Accepted for publication in GigaScience*, 2022.

2022 Bhattacharya D., **Stephens T. G.**, Tinoco A., Richmond R., and Cleves P. A. Life on the edge: Hawaiian model for coral evolution. *Limnology and Oceanography*, 67:1976-1985, 2022. [[URL](#)]

2022 *Calatrevilla V., ***Stephens T. G.**, Gabr A., Grossman A. R., and Bhattacharya D. Retrotransposition facilitated the establishment of a primary plastid in the thecate amoeba *Paulinella*. *PNAS*, 119:e2121241119, 2022. *Co-first authorship [[URL](#)]

2022 *Gabr A., ***Stephens T. G.**, and Bhattacharya D. Hypothesis: *Trans*-splicing generates evolutionary novelty in the photosynthetic amoeba *Paulinella*. *Journal of Phycology*, 58:392-405, 2022. *Co-first authorship [[URL](#)]

- 2022 Dougan K. E., Gonzalez-Pech R. A., **Stephens T. G.**, Shah S., Chen Y., Ragan M. A., Bhattacharya D., and Chan C. X. Genome-powered classification of microbial eukaryotes: focus on coral algal symbionts. *Trends in Microbiology*, 30:831-840, 2022. [[URL](#)]
- 2021 **Stephens T. G.**, Gabr A., Calatreda V., Grossman A. R., and Bhattacharya D. Why is primary endosymbiosis so rare?. *New Phytologist*, 231:1693-1699, 2021. [[URL](#)]
- 2021 Gonzalez-Pech, R. A., **Stephens T. G.**, Chen Y., Mohamed A. R., Cheng Y., Shah S., Dougan K. E., Fortuin M. D. A., Lagorce R., Burt D. W., Bhattacharya D., Ragan M. A., and Chan C. X. Comparison of 15 dinoflagellate genomes reveals extensive sequence and structural divergence in family Symbiodiniaceae and genus *Symbiodinium*. *BMC Biology*, 19:73, 2021. [[Preprint](#)] [[URL](#)]
- 2021 Williams A., Pathmanathan J. S., **Stephens T. G.**, Su X., Chiles E. N., Conetta D., Putnam H. M., and Bhattacharya D. Multi-omic characterization of the thermal stress phenome in the stony coral *Montipora capitata*. *PeerJ*, 9:e12335, 2021. [[Preprint](#)] [[URL](#)]
- 2020 **Stephens T. G.**, Gonzalez-Pech R. A., Cheng Y., Mohamed A. R., Burt D. W., Bhattacharya D., Ragan M. A., and Chan C. X. Genomes of the dinoflagellate *Polarella glacialis* encode tandemly repeated single-exon genes with adaptive functions. *BMC Biology*, 18:56, 2020. [[Preprint](#)] Featured by [IMB News](#) [[URL](#)]
- 2019 Chen Y., Gonzalez-Pech R. A., **Stephens T. G.**, Bhattacharya D., and Chan C. X. Evidence that inconsistent gene prediction can mislead analysis of dinoflagellate genomes. *Journal of Phycology*, 56:6-10, 2019. [[Preprint](#)] [[URL](#)]
- 2018 Liu H., **Stephens T. G.**, Gonzalez-Pech R. A., Beltran V. H., Lapeyre B., Bongaerts P., Cooke I., Aranda M., Bourne D. G., Foret S., Miller D. J., van Oppen M. J. H., Voolstra C. R., Ragan M.A., and Chan C.X. *Symbiodinium* genomes reveal adaptive evolution of functions related to coral-dinoflagellate symbiosis. *Communications Biology*, 1:95, 2018. [[Preprint](#)] Featured by multiple outlets: [MB News](#), [GBRF](#), [Video Feature](#), [IMB 2018 year in review video](#), [[URL](#)]
- 2018 **Stephens T. G.**, Ragan M. A., Bhattacharya D., and Chan C. X. Core genes in diverse dinoflagellate lineages include a wealth of conserved dark genes with unknown functions. *Scientific Reports*, 8:17175, 2018. [[URL](#)]

Talks

- 2017 **Stephens T. G.**, Bhattacharya D., Ragan M. A. and Chan C. X. Insights into coral reef symbiosis from the genome of cold-adapted algae. *EMBL Australia Postgraduate Symposium 2017*, 29th November-1st December 2017, Sydney, Australia.
- 2018 **Stephens T. G.**, Bhattacharya D., Ragan M. A., and Chan C. X. *Polarella* genomics: understanding the evolutionary transition to algal symbiosis and cold adaptation. *Botany Department, Biosciences Institute, University of Sao Paulo*. 14th December 2018, Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- 2018 **Stephens T. G.**, Bhattacharya D., Ragan M. A., and Chan C. X. *Polarella* genomics: understanding the evolutionary transition to algal symbiosis and cold adaptation. *2nd Bioenergy Workshop, UNESP-USP-UNICAMP Integrated Postgraduate Program in Bioenergy, Institute for Research in Bioenergy, State University of Sao Paulo (UNESP)*. 6th December 2018, Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- 2019 **Stephens T. G.**, Bhattacharya D., Ragan M. A., and Chan C. X. *Polarella* genomics: understanding the evolutionary transition to algal symbiosis and cold adaptation. *Joint Academic Microbiology Seminars (JAMS)*. 9th April 2019, Brisbane, Australia.

- 2021 **Stephens T. G.**, Calatrava V., Gabr A., Grossman A., and Bhattacharya D. Insights into the evolution of a primary endosymbiosis through analysis of the *Paulinella* genome. 12th International Phycological Congress. 2226th March 2021, Chile.
- 2021 **Stephens T. G.**, Calatrava V., Gabr A., Grossman A., and Bhattacharya D. Insights into the evolution of a primary endosymbiosis through analysis of the *Paulinella* genome. 75th Annual Meeting of the Phycological Society of America. 1322nd July 2021, online.
- 2022 **Stephens T. G.**, Etten J. V., McDermott T., and Bhattacharya D. Analysis of environmental meta-omics data from the extremophilic red algae Cyanidiophyceae. Joint Aquatic Sciences Meeting. 1420th May, 2022, Grand Rapids, USA.
- 2022 **Stephens T. G.**, Strand E. L., Putnam H. M., and Bhattacharya D. Differences in ploidy and the prevalence of clonal propagation between *Montipora capitata* and *Pocillopora acuta* from Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. 15th International Coral Reef Symposium. 38th July 2022, Bremen, Germany.

Grants

- 2018 UQ-FAPESP Strategic Research Fund SPRINT (2018/15159-9), \$20,000 (~USD \$14,000) Integrated genomic approaches to understand stress tolerance in bioethanol-producing yeasts and coral reef symbionts
Principal Investigators: Cheong Xin Chan (UQ) and Jeferson Gross (State University of Sao Paulo), Jointly funded by University of Queensland (UQ) and Sao Paulo State Foundation (FAPESP)
- 2022 Core Facility Utilization Application, \$5,000 USD
Funds for sequencing of coral microbiome samples.
Principal Investigators: Debashish Bhattacharya (Rutgers University), Rutgers University
- 2022 Center for Nutrition, Microbiome, and Health Small Grant FY-22, \$2,000 USD
Characterizing the coral microbiome biogeography across colonies and reefs.
Principal Investigators: Debashish Bhattacharya (Rutgers University), Center for Nutrition, Rutgers University

Media coverage

- 2020 Our paper "[Why is primary endosymbiosis so rare?](#)" covered by [Rutgers Newsroom](#)
- 2021 Our paper "[Third Party Tracking in the Mobile Ecosystem](#)" covered by [Rutgers Today](#)
- 2022 Our paper "[Retrotransposition facilitated the establishment of a primary plastid in thecate amoeba Paulinella](#)" covered by [Rutgers Research](#)
- 2022 Article on our short film "[The Coral Holobiont Response to Climate Change](#)" which won Best Trailer in the Kiez Berlin Film Festival. Covered by [Rutgers Research](#)