

Abstract for an Invited Paper  
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**Evolution of Biological Diversity**

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A conservative estimate posits approximately ten million species presently inhabiting Earth, and these are clearly only a small fraction of those that have existed throughout Earth's history. Although various types of selective mechanisms have been identified as generating this diversity, and several chance mechanisms as well, the relative importance of these mechanisms is not firmly resolved. We review the current status of the discussion and some of the associated political and social ramifications.