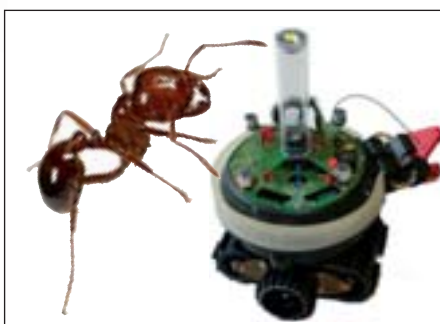




We are still far from understanding the dynamic and molecular basis of speciation. But after a long period of stagnancy, new concepts are arising. (p. 24)



Laurent Keller et al. don't restrict themselves to ants. In some of their experiments, they can even see the evolution of cooperative behaviour in robots. (p. 30)



The optimisation of biomolecules by randomised methods is a growing business. We visited Sloning Biotech near Munich and talked with the company's founder. (p. 40)



The oocyte of *Xenopus laevis* are used by many laboratories for electrophysiological recordings. Steven D. Buckingham provides some hints for their optimal use. (p. 44)

News

EMBO Journal editorial policy / European research policy: Vision 2020 /

Recently awarded / European paper: Reverse evolution _____ 06-10

Opinion (Darwin Year 2009)

Observations of The Owl (15): *Nobody's Perfect* _____ 12

Analysis (Darwin Year 2009)

Evolution today

Population geneticist and book author Steve Jones talks about explaining evolution to the public, updating Darwin, the presumed end of human evolution and about working on snails _____ 18

Species

What exactly is a species? Whereas dozens of different species concepts are still under discussion, many scientists insist that a universal definition is impossible _____ 20

Speciation

Diethard Tautz, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Plön (Germany), reviews the current status of scientific knowledge on how existing species split into new ones _____ 24

Evolutionary theory in Eastern Europe

What's the status of evolutionary theory in the science and schools of Eastern Europe? Livia Puljak collected some snapshots from the Balkan states _____ 28

Journal Club (Darwin Year 2009)

Lausanne/Switzerland Evolution of social behaviour _____ 30

Tubingen/Germany Protein evolution _____ 32

Uppsala/Sweden Molecular evolution in birds _____ 34

Biobusiness (Darwin Year 2009)

News

UK sportsman backs developer of cancer therapeutics / White biotech: compound developers join forces / Ratiopharm faces uncertain future after owner's suicide _____ 36

Interview with Anindya Mukherjee, Direvo Industrial Biotechnology (Germany), about manipulating genes without knowing their structure _____ 38

Close-up: Directed evolution in Central Europe

Whilst performing test-tube evolution, Sloning Biotechnology from Puchheim near Munich has noticed sudden opportunities for biotech companies _____ 40

Overview: Random optimising of biomolecules. A small selection of companies _____ 43

Service

Methods

Bench philosophy (16): Ten tips for better oocyte recordings _____ 44

Tips and tricks of the trade: Melting the way to cell colonies _____ 46

Product Survey

Real Time PCR Kits _____ 47

New products _____ 53

Book Reviews (Darwin Year 2009)

The Beagle Letters, by Charles Darwin (edited by Frederick Burkhardt)

Plus an additional handful of new books published for Darwin Year 2009. _____ 54

Calendar _____ 60

Appointments _____ 62

Humour

Paul the Postdoc _____ 06

One fine day in the lab (11): *Imaging Workshop* _____ 23

Cartoon: *Superdoc* (9) _____ 66

Imprint _____ 35