

Abstract:

"Evolutionary Developmental Biology (EDB) is an experimental discipline that tries to address the following basic questions: How do novel (apomorphic) traits arise? What are the genetic changes that underlie novelty? To address these questions requires a solid phylogenetic framework for the group of interest. Nematodes feature a good molecular phylogeny, one major model organism (*Caenorhabditis elegans*) and a history of comparative developmental biology. Our lab has established *Pristionchus pacificus* as a "satellite" model organism to *C. elegans*. We wish to understand how vulva formation, a process well described, differs between these two species and what the underlying genetic changes are. In the course of my Ph.D work I have primarily worked on the evolution of the size of the vulva equivalence group but have also worked on vulva induction and developed several methods. I will present a review of our work and discuss two examples that are of interest to EDB: an example for evolutionary novelty and an example of developmental systems drift (DSD). "

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"On the evolution of the nematode vulva equivalence group."