

# News release

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## For immediate release

**To celebrate the birthday of the most famous biologist in history, Charles Darwin, on 12 February, visit the Web of Stories video recordings of the award-winning evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr who shares his thoughts on Darwin's remarkable, world-changing theories**

It's widely thought that no other individual has influenced our knowledge of life on Earth as much as English naturalist Charles Robert Darwin (12 February 1809 – 19 April 1882). While his theory of evolution by natural selection has been modified over time, it is still accepted by the scientific community as the best, evidence-based explanation for how we came to exist.

An acknowledged expert in the work of Darwin was Ernst Mayr (1904 – 2005), the late German-American biologist who has been credited with inventing the modern philosophy of biology, particularly in the field of evolutionary biology. Over the course of his lifetime, Mayr received every award possible for a scientist in his field. To preserve memories of his remarkable career, he agreed to record and share compelling tales of his life and work, none of which would be complete without referencing the work of Darwin.

Among other subjects, viewers can watch Mayr reflecting on his desire to publish a facsimile of *On the Origin of the Species*, claiming that Darwin was overlooked as a philosopher: 'I felt that the *Origin of Species*, particularly the first edition, was... neglected and the reprints didn't keep the same paging so you couldn't refer to Darwin's original statements. So I persuaded Harvard University Press in 1964 to publish a facsimile edition of the first edition... Well, it has been selling ever since.'

Mayr also talks of his decision to write a book that he felt was vital to tell the complete story on Darwin: 'If you go to the big biographies... they tell you every last detail about his life... but do you find a decent discussion of his theories? No, you won't because these people are historians... they are not qualified to discuss Darwin's theories in detail. So this rather small book of mine, *One Long Argument*, was the first really detailed treatment of Darwin's theory in the last, I don't know what, 50 years or more. And it is very important to distinguish these theories.'

Web of Stories also has clips of John Maynard Smith, the late British biologist, and Francis Crick, the late British scientist, discussing Darwin. All the stories are available with a fully searchable transcript, and range in length from two minutes to more than eight.

The videos of Mayr, and others, are easy to share with friends and colleagues, and are free for embedding into personal blogs and websites.

## Notes for Editors

### About Web of Stories

*Everyone has a story to tell.* Over time many stories become forgotten, but now Web of Stories offers members of the public the chance to tell their stories for future generations to enjoy.

Web of Stories began as an archive of life stories told by some of the great scientists of our time. As the number of stories grew, it became obvious that some were on related topics and a web was slowly being created of connected stories. After a while we also invited famous people outside the field of science to tell their life stories. Web of Stories is also open to the public to record their stories for the world to view and share. The project is built on the belief that we all have wonderful stories to share, and have family and friends whose tales we would like to hear. The great thing about Web of Stories is that anyone can come and talk about virtually anything they like. Just like our famous speakers, it is an account of their experiences as they remember them.

We hope to provide lasting, first-hand accounts of people's experiences. Imagine that in a hundred years' time your grandchildren or great grandchildren will be able to watch you telling stories about your life today!

### Contact:

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