

## Ecology and evolution in the genomic era - integrating genomics and comparative morphology

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<https://zoom.us/j/97514959400>

Understanding the forces that drive speciation in marine environments is challenging. High dispersal potential of organisms with planktonic larvae and lack of clear geographic barriers to gene flow, greatly complicate our ability to reconstruct the chain of events leading to the formation of new species. Echinoderms are one of the most prominent and wide-spread groups of benthic marine invertebrates. Distributed across all of the world's oceans, from the poles to the equator and from abyssal to intertidal depths, they are among the most ecologically significant components of diverse marine environments. Comprising over 7,000 living species, echinoderms are the second-largest group of deuterostomes, strategically situated at the base of the evolutionary split leading to vertebrates. This unique evolutionary setup coupled with their fundamental ecological role, turns echinoderms into promising primary research models.

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