

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Date: Jan. 27, 2009

Contact: Carolyn Belardo 215 299-1043, belardo@ansp.org

To download this release: www.ansp.org/media

ACADEMY CELEBRATES TIES TO DARWIN WITH RENOWNED ENVIRONMENTALIST TALK AND EVOLUTION PANEL

PHILADELPHIA—The Academy of Natural Sciences joins in celebrating the anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and publication of his groundbreaking book "On the Origin of Species" with two free public programs about evolution.

Dr. Paul Ehrlich, a world-renowned environmental scientist and author of "Population Bomb," will speak at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 5 about "The Dominant Animal: Human Evolution and the Environment in the Obama Administration." At 6:30 p.m. on March 30, a panel of educators will discuss the challenges of "Teaching Evolution in Elementary School." To register for these free events, contact Roland Wall, rwall@ansp.org or 215 299-1108 or log on to http://www.ansp.org/environmental/townsquare/email_signup.php.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth (on Feb. 12) and the 150th anniversary of "On the Origin of Species," which introduced the evidence for evolution and natural selection. The Academy was the first American institution to recognize the importance of Darwin's research. On March 27, 1860, just four months after he published his controversial book, the Academy's trustees embraced Darwin's research and elected him a corresponding member. In a letter in the Academy's archives dated March 4, 1860, Darwin wrote to curator Dr. Joseph Leidy, "Most paleontologists (with some few good exceptions) entirely despise my work; consequently approbation from you has gratified me much."

"It was difficult for Darwin to find acceptance for his controversial theories at first," said Senior Fellow of the Academy Robert Peck. "He was pleased to find a colleague, especially in America, who could help reinforce his interpretation of the world with facts derived from independent research." Today the Academy, the oldest natural science research institution and museum in the Americas, supports the groundbreaking research of modern Darwins in the field of entomology, ichthyology, botany and paleontology.

In keeping with the Darwin theme, on Feb. 5 Ehrlich will discuss his new book (co-authored with his wife, Anne) entitled "The Dominant Animal: Human Evolution and the Environment." A longtime advocate of conservation and environmental protection, Ehrlich's controversial 1968 book "Population Bomb" sparked a global debate about overpopulation and famine that continues today. His latest book concerns learning from our evolutionary past and adapting in ways that safeguard the environment. Ehrlich, Stanford University's Bing Professor of Population Studies, has written

-more-

dozens of books and hundreds of articles. A native of Philadelphia and graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he volunteered at the Academy before beginning almost half a century of teaching and researching butterflies and biodiversity at Stanford.

On Monday, March 30, at 6:30 p.m., a panel of educators will discuss the philosophical and practical obstacles to introducing evolution to elementary school students. They will offer advice for teachers and parents on ways to overcome them. The discussion is free and open to the public. Panelists include Jacquie Genovesi, the Academy's Senior Director of Education, and Dr. Colin Purrington, associate professor of evolutionary biology at Swarthmore College. Genovesi, with her team of museum educators, sets the curriculum for the Academy's science lessons to visiting schoolchildren and for outreach programs. The lessons are based on the research of Academy scientists, including the principles of evolution. Purrington has studied different ways of introducing evolutionary science to children and has developed an outreach program for the elementary set.

Ehrlich's lecture and the panel discussion are part of the Academy's Town Square series, sponsored by the Academy's Center for Environmental Policy with support from the William Penn Foundation and the Environmental Associates of the Academy.

###

Founded in 1812, The Academy of Natural Sciences is the oldest natural science research institution and museum in the Americas and is a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. The mission of the Academy is the encouragement and cultivation of the sciences.

The Academy is located at 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and weekends until 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for children ages 3–12, seniors, college students and military personnel, and free for Members and children under 3. There is an additional \$2 entry fee for "Butterflies!"