

Free Public Lecture at Scripps Explores the Evolution of Bugs and Bytes

Rosenblatt lectureship by Richard Lenski to be held May 15

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Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego's third annual Richard H. and Glenda G. Rosenblatt Lectureship in Evolutionary Biology will be given by Richard E. Lenski, John Hannah distinguished professor of microbial ecology at Michigan State University, for his outstanding scientific contributions in evolutionary biology.

Lenski's lecture, entitled "Evolution in Action: Bugs and Bytes," will take place at 3 p.m. on Thursday, May 15, 2008, in Sumner Auditorium on the Scripps Oceanography campus, 8602 La Jolla Shores Drive in La Jolla (Sumner Auditorium is one-half block north of El Paseo Grande). The lecture is free and open to the public.

Lenski's research explores the genetic mechanisms and ecological processes that underlie evolution. While most evolutionary research is done by the comparative method or by studying fossils, Lenski watches evolution as it happens through experiments with organisms such as bacteria that replicate, mutate and evolve quickly. In an experiment started 20 years ago, Lenski and his team watch populations of the harmful bacteria *Escherichia coli*, commonly known as E-coli, evolve in the laboratory to investigate the dynamics of adaptation and diversification. More recently, Lenski and interdisciplinary collaborators have extended the idea of evolution experiments to artificial life in the form of computer programs that replicate, mutate and evolve to solve computational problems.

"It's a real honor to be invited to give a lecture by such an illustrious institution as Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and all the more so when the lecture series has been funded by one of the institution's own faculty, Dr. Rosenblatt, and his wife," said Lenski. "It's an exciting opportunity to be a public voice for basic, curiosity-driven science."

Lenski is a MacArthur Foundation Fellow and an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences.

The Rosenblatt Lectureship is part of an endowed series of yearly lectures by distinguished evolutionary biologists. It was created by ichthyologist Richard Rosenblatt and his wife, Glenda. Rosenblatt, who has been associated with Scripps since 1958, is a Scripps professor and curator emeritus of the Marine Vertebrates Collection, part of the Scripps Oceanographic Collections, the largest and most complete university-based oceanographic collection in the world.

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