

Evolution erasing our Neanderthal genes, rooting out harmful variants

Although the Neanderthals went extinct 30,000 years ago, their genes live on in human beings. A [new study](#) at the University of California, Davis, has found, however, that those strands of DNA are systematically being erased through natural selection.

“On average, there has been weak but widespread selection against Neanderthal genes,” [said Graham Coop](#), professor at the universit[y]s’ department of Evolution and Ecology. The selection may have come about as a consequence of a small number of Neanderthals interacting with a substantially larger modern human population.

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[However,] there wasn’t a strong selection against a small number of their genes but rather ...weak and widespread selection opposing Neanderthal DNA and gradually bringing about its removal from the modern human genome.

Coop asserted that that is in keeping with the understanding that a minor Neanderthal population mixed with a much greater human one. Whereas inbreeding within small populations causes genetic variants to be relatively common, even if harmful, when mixed with a significantly larger population, the process of natural selection goes against the variants – rooting them out.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Evolution is killing off the Neanderthal's leftover genes](#)