

Viewpoint: Challenging those who claim evolution is ‘just a theory’

Such widespread rejection of the theory of evolution is fueled in part by the notion that evolution is “just a theory.” This is the idea that evolution is just a speculative hypothesis — on a par with the biblical creation myth — with little-to-no basis in hard, scientific evidence.

The first thing to note about this claim is that it is simply not true — but even worse than the falsehood of the just-a-theory claim is the fact that it represents a grave injustice. To declare that evolution is “just a theory” is to suggest that Charles Darwin was “just a theorist” — that he was some sort of armchair scientist, spinning out scientific guesses in a vacuum instead of drawing his ideas from careful observations of nature. The just-a-theory allegation implies that Darwin formulated his theory without ever getting his hands dirty.

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Darwin’s theory of [evolution](#) by natural selection is the product of a monumental, lifelong effort to collect and integrate mountains of factual evidence. He developed it only after assembling and reflecting on a large body of compelling observations and data. And he devoted his entire life to finding and gathering facts and arguments supporting the theory, and to considering every possible objection and implication.

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