Special Issue

Evolution of Crown Cetacea

Message from the Guest Editor

In the last few decades, a large amount of work has elucidated several aspects of the transition from archaeocetes to neocetes or crown cetaceans. This transition affected most if not all of the skeletal districts and, very probably, soft tissues and genetic characters, making it possibly the origin of the body plans of the whale and dolphin species living today. Morphological studies of the fossil record showed that convergent evolutionary paths transformed the postcranial skeleton of later archaeocetes along the different lineages of odontocetes and mysticetes; analysis of brain evolution provided evidence that different patterns and processes occurred along the mysticete and odontocete lineages; genetic studies targeted those genes that were responsible of morphological transformations in the extant cetacean lineages; paleobiogeographic analyses of occurrence data suggested that the past distribution of whales and dolphins was different from today and enabled the search for the ecological reasons that could have shaped the modern-day cetacean distribution.

Guest Editor

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