

**Article Preview****Every species has a 'barcode'**

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WRITTEN in the DNA of every animal is a unique barcode that could let taxonomists identify every animal on the planet with unprecedented ease.

The barcode is written on a mitochondrial gene, which is found in all aerobic life, that codes for a protein called cytochrome c oxidase I. The new method should make life easier for scientists trying to assess biodiversity.

Conventional taxonomy has hit a bottleneck because it demands expert anatomical comparisons of complete animal specimens. It has taken 250 years to classify about one million animal species - about 10 per cent of the global total, says Paul Hebert of the University of Guelph in Ontario.

Hebert convened a workshop at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York State last week after suggesting earlier this year (Proceedings of the Royal Society B, vol 270, p 313) that certain DNA sequences are as good as barcodes and ...

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