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The Barcoding Of Life



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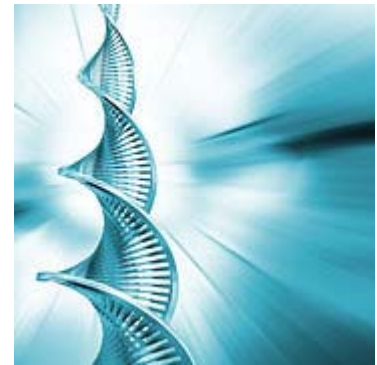
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Let's say you find a little piece of wildlife - a single hair, or a fragment of skin. What if you could pop it into a portable device, and learn its exact species - all in a matter of minutes?

Paul Herbert, a geneticist from Ontario, Canada, discovered a fragment of DNA that's unique to every species of animal. By reading this short gene sequence, any species can be positively identified.



DNA - Genetic Barcode

"Genetic barcoding" uses these small snippets of DNA to identify species. In one example, the technique helped researchers identify 16 previously indistinguishable species of Costa Rican butterflies.

It also led to the discovery of an extremely rare species of ant on Mauritius, an island off the coast of India. Conservationists were able to protect the last few acres of the ant's habitat, probably saving it from extinction.

Using this "genetic barcoding" in combination with traditional identification practices is helping scientists make rapid advances in understanding the world's biodiversity - knowledge that can be immediately applied to protecting our world's endangered species.

Script by Carlos de la Rosa
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Discovery Links

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