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## Understanding and confronting species uncertainty in biology and conservation

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### Abstract

Recent essays on the species problem have emphasized the commonality that many species concepts have with basic evolutionary theory. Although true, such consensus fails to address the nature of the ambiguity that is associated with species-related research. We argue that biologists who endure the species problem can benefit from a synthesis in which individual taxonomic species are used as hypotheses of evolutionary entities. We discuss two sources of species uncertainty: one that is a semantic confusion, and a second that is caused by the inherent uncertainty of evolutionary entities. The former can be dispelled with careful communication, whereas the latter is a conventional scientific uncertainty that can only be mitigated by research. This scientific uncertainty cannot be "solved" or stamped out, but neither need it be ignored or feared.



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