

"INCEST AND FOLK-DANCING - TWO THINGS TO AVOID"

Professor Steve Jones

Steve Jones is an award winning scientist and author who plays a major role in popular debate on evolution and human genetics. Some of his many books include "Darwin's island: the Galapagos in the garden of England"; "Coral: a pessimist in paradise" and "Y: The Descent of Men".



Image source: cotswolds.info

1-2 PM WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL 2011

Venue: The Robertson Lecture Theatre
R.N. Robertson Building (no. 46)
Research School of Biology

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Sir Thomas Beecham once said: "Try anything once but incest and folk-dancing" (he pointed out that brass bands, too, are all very well in their place, "in the open air and several miles away"). Sex with a relative is often frowned upon, but is in fact universal, for we all share ancestors in the recent past. On average, two randomly chosen Britons of European descent are sixth cousins, with their common ancestor alive in Darwin's day. Darwin himself was worried about the effects of close intermarriage, for he married his own first cousin. This lecture will talk about sex, about how inbreeding is an escape from true sexual reproduction, about how some creatures abandon sex altogether - and about how mating within the family is still surprisingly common in some populations although it may, at last, be on the way out.