

## The First Phase of the Project Darwin Tree of Life (DToL) is nearing the Completion

The Darwin Tree of Life (DToL) project's first phase, which ran from 2019 to 2022, is complete. As of August 2025, the project had collected approximately 8,000 species and sequenced more than 2,000 high-quality genomes from Britain and Ireland, a major step toward its ultimate goal of cataloging all of the eukaryotic life in that region.

### Objectives of the first phase

The pilot phase of the DToL project demonstrated the feasibility of generating high-quality reference genomes at scale and established best practices for specimen collection and data management.

### Key achievements and goals for the initial phase included:

- Sequencing at least 2,000 high-quality, chromosome-level reference genomes.
- Collecting specimens for 8,000 species, with the aim of covering one representative from each of Britain and Ireland's roughly 4,000 eukaryotic families.
- Developing and refining an end-to-end process for collecting, identifying, sequencing, and annotating genomes.
- Making all data openly accessible to the public and the global scientific community.
- Innovating techniques for sequencing challenging organisms, including those with extremely large or small genomes.

### Significant milestones

- **First 500 genome assemblies released:** By December 2022, DToL had released 500 reference-quality genome assemblies to public databases. The initial genomes spanned diverse groups, including arthropods, plants, and fungi, showcasing the project's broad taxonomic reach.
- **Sequencing challenging species:** The project successfully tackled difficult genomes, such as the European mistletoe, which at 30 times the size of the human genome, is the largest genome in Britain and Ireland.
- **Global contribution:** As a member of the larger Earth BioGenome Project (EBP), DToL's progress has proven that the EBP's ambitious goal of sequencing all eukaryotic life is attainable.

## Practice Questions:

1. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Darwin Tree of Life (DToL) project':

- I. The project aims to sequence the genomes of all prokaryotic life forms found in Britain and Ireland
- II. It is a regional initiative that contributes to the global 'Earth BioGenome Project'

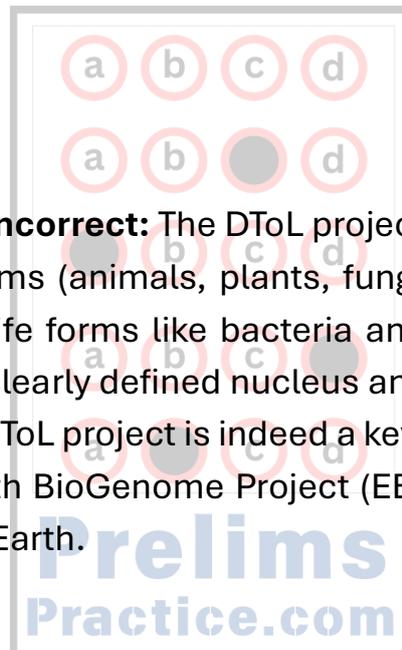
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) I only
- b) II only
- c) Both I and II
- d) Neither I nor II

**Answer: b**

**Explanation: Statement I is Incorrect:** The DToL project specifically targets the 70,000 species of eukaryotic organisms (animals, plants, fungi, and protists) found in Britain and Ireland, not prokaryotic life forms like bacteria and archaea. Eukaryotic cells are more complex, possessing a clearly defined nucleus and membrane-bound organelles.

**Statement II is correct:** The DToL project is indeed a key regional (UK-Ireland) partner in the much broader, global Earth BioGenome Project (EBP), which aims to sequence all known eukaryotic species on Earth.

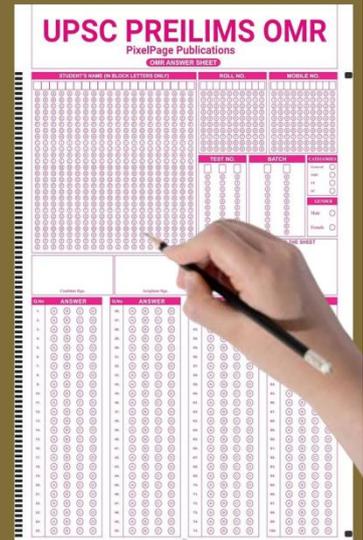


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