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Editor's pick: Another forgotten evolution pioneer

From Derek Hough

John van Wyhe mentions most of the key players in our acceptance of the idea of evolution ([16 July, p 35](#)). Alfred Russel Wallace's legacy to scientific thought was later tarnished by his enthusiasm for mesmerism, mediums and spiritualism. No such criticism could be levelled at Patrick Matthew, who van Wyhe doesn't mention. He spelled out the theory of natural selection in his 1831 book [On Naval Timber and Arboriculture](#).

Charles Darwin acknowledged Matthew's contribution. An 1862 letter to Matthew opened: "Dear Sir, I presume I have the pleasure of addressing the... first enunciator of the theory of Natural Selection."

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