

Simon Aeschbacher

Personal Information

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Career Summary

An evolutionary biologist combining mathematical modelling, population-genetic theory, and computational approaches to study the evolution and maintenance of biological diversity in natural populations. Devised approaches for efficient demographic inference in structured populations. Developed multilocus theory to model the interaction of divergent selection and gene flow. Advanced the inference on adaptive divergence and speciation with gene flow from genomic data. Quantified the effects of purifying selection on genetic diversity and Neanderthal ancestry in humans. Integrating modern and historical DNA to study speciation, domestication and plant-pathogen evolution in tomato. University-level teaching in evolutionary biology, mathematical biology, and scientific writing. Initiated the Life Science Zurich Writing Lab. Co-developing the AllWrite mobile app to facilitate peer-learning and coaching in scientific writing (www.allwrite-app.ch).

Education

Since 08/2023 **CAS in Higher Education, University of Zurich**, Switzerland. Two years.
01/2008–09/2011 **PhD in Evolutionary Biology, University of Edinburgh**, United Kingdom. Thesis: Statistical inference on evolutionary processes in Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*): mutation, migration and selection. Viva voce: 14 September 2011. Graduation date: 24 November 2011. Supervisor: **Prof. Dr. Nicholas H. Barton**.
09/2003–06/2007 **MSc in Zoology, University of Zurich**, Switzerland. Thesis with distinction: Contrasting observed and simulated genetic structure of bottlenecked Alpine ibex populations reveals evidence for gene flow. Supervisor: **Prof. Dr. Lukas F. Keller**.
08/1996–01/2001 **Maturity Type B, High School of the Canton Thurgau**, Frauenfeld, Switzerland

Employment History

Since 04/2019 **Independent Group Leader**, Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, **University of Zurich**, Switzerland. Population genomic theory and analyses of whole-genome data to understand adaptive divergence and speciation with gene flow, with applications to wild tomatoes (*Solanum* sect. *Lycopersicon*). Herbarium genomics approaches to discovering the (co-)evolutionary history of the cultivated tomato and late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). Teaching and mentoring. Establishing a research group. Teaching and mentoring.
11/2017–03/2019 **Independent Postdoctoral Fellow**, Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, **University of Zurich**, Switzerland. Theory and analyses of whole-genome data to understand adaptive divergence and speciation with gene

- flow. Modelling and inference of demographic history and purifying selection with applications to humans. Teaching and mentoring.
- 01/2017–09/2017 **Postdoctoral Fellow**, Institute of Ecology and Evolution, University of Bern, Switzerland, with **Prof. Dr. Laurent Excoffier**. Quantifying the impact of purifying selection on genomic diversity in humans. Teaching assistance.
- 01/2014–12/2016 **Postdoctoral Fellow**, Department of Evolution and Ecology / Center for Population Biology, University of California Davis, United States, with **Prof. Dr. Graham Coop**. Jointly inferring gene flow and polygenic divergent selection from genome-wide sequence and recombination data. Quantifying purifying selection against Neanderthal ancestry in modern humans. Teaching and mentoring.
- 10/2011–12/2013 **Postdoctoral Fellow**, Department of Mathematics, University of Vienna, Austria, with **Prof. Dr. Reinhard Bürger**. Multilocus migration–selection theory. Teaching.
- 02/2007–12/2007 Research assistant in an Alpine ibex population genetics study, Zoological Museum, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- 11/2005–02/2007 Part-time employment in **Museum Education for kids** at the **Museum of Natural History of Winterthur**, Switzerland
- 03/2004–04/2004 Lab assistant in a plant–insect study, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- 06/2001–07/2001 Field assistant in a study on the breeding ecology of barn swallow, Vogelwarte Sempach (Swiss Ornithological Institute), Switzerland

Approved Research Projects

- Since 07/2023 **Swiss Open Research Data Grant, Track A: Explore projects, Measure A1 – Project “E-Specimina”** by swissuniversities to investigate needs and solutions for managing and publishing organismal research data derived from natural-history collections under Open Science principles (18 months). CHF 75,000 federal contribution (total project costs: CHF 150,000). Role: Co-applicant. Main applicant: PD Dr. Reto Nyffeler, University of Zurich.
- 06/2021–05/2023 **Competitive Teaching Fund of the University of Zurich** to establish the Life Science Zurich Writing Lab, a peer-learning and training platform empowering Biology students to write more and better. CHF 36 000 (2 years of salary for a software developer to implement the Life Science Zurich AllWrite mobile app for students and writing coaches). Role: Project leader and main applicant. Co-applicants: Dr. Ursina Tobler and Dr. George Hausmann, both University of Zurich.
- Since 01/2021 PhD project on plant pathosystem evolution by the **University Research Priority Program (URPP) Evolution in Action** of the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Four years of PhD salary and CHF 40 000 for research costs and consumables. Project title: Mining herbaria to explore phylogeography and coevolution in plant pathosystems: the case of the Irish potato famine pathogen *Phytophthora infestans* and its solanaceous hosts. Role: Co-main applicant. Co-main applicant: Prof. Dr. Verena Schünemann, University of Zurich and University of Basel. Co-applicant: Dr. Jurriaan M. de Vos, University of Basel. Student: Donikë Sejdiu.
- Since 01/2021 PhD project on the role of epigenetic variation in diversification and adaptation by the **URPP Evolution in Action** of the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Four years of PhD salary and CHF 40 000 for research costs and consumables. Project title: EpiPop – Investigating the role, stability, and distribution of epigenetic variation in populations of *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Role: Co-applicant. Main applicant: Prof. Dr. Ueli Grossniklaus, University of Zurich. Student: Alex Plüss.
- Since 01/2021 PhD project on experimental evolution and modelling by the **URPP Evolution in Action** of the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Four years of PhD salary and CHF 40 000 for research costs and consumables. Project title: Tracking genomic and phenotypic changes induced by experimental manipulation of natural pollinator communities. Role: Co-applicant. Main applicant: Dr. Léa Frachon, University of Zurich. Student: Elisabeth Authier.
- 05/2019–12/2020 Pilot study by the **URPP Evolution in Action** of the University of Zurich,

- Switzerland. CHF 19 300 (ancient DNA extraction, library preparation and whole-genome resequencing of 18 tomato herbarium specimens). Project title: Tracing the genomic signature of 400 years of tomato domestication in Europe using herbarium specimens. Role: Co-PI. Main applicant: PhD student Thomas Grubinger. Co-PI: Prof. Dr. Verena Schünemann, University of Zurich.
- 05/2019–12/2020 Pilot study by the **URPP Evolution in Action** of the University of Zurich, Switzerland. CHF 15 100 (DNA library preparation, whole-genome resequencing, and RAD-sequencing of 40 *Sphagnum magellanicum* specimens; genome assembly improvement). Project title: Testing recent theoretical models of speciation using the *Sphagnum magellanicum* complex as an experimental system. Role: Co-applicant. Main applicant: Dr. Narjes Yousefi, University of Zurich. PI: Dr. Peter Szövényi, University of Zurich.
- Since 01/2019 **Project Funding in Biology and Medicine by the Swiss National Science Foundation** (4 years plus 1 year cost-neutral extension). CHF 429 658 (PhD salary, research costs, computing time and data storage, equipment, whole-genome sequencing, genome assembly). Project title: Mapping the genomic landscape of gene flow and natural selection. Role: Main applicant and PI.
- 06/2018–12/2019 Research grant by the **Julius Klaus Foundation**, Switzerland. CHF 10 000 (DNA extraction and SNP chip genotyping). Project title: Establishing the genomic relationship and demographic history of Swiss Walser colonies by genome-wide SNP genotyping of existing blood samples. Role: Main applicant and PI.
- 06/2016–12/2017 Pilot study by the **URPP Evolution in Action** of the University of Zurich, Switzerland. CHF 20 000 (library preparation and whole-genome resequencing of 18 human genomes). Project title: Exploring the trajectories and genomic consequences of the Walser expansion. Role: Co-applicant. Co-applicants: Prof. Dr. Laurent Excoffier, University of Bern; Prof. Dr. Michael Krützen, University of Zurich; Dr. Natasha Arora, University of Zurich.

Teaching Activities

- Since 11/2019 Teaching of lectures and practicals on **Migration, Genetic Drift, Inbreeding, and Quantitative Genetics** as part of a three-week block course on Principles of Evolutionary Biology – Theory for BSc and MSc students in Biology at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Once a year.
- Since 09/2019 Co-teaching of an **Evolutionary Genomics Journal Club** for PhD students of the Zurich Life Science Graduate School, Switzerland, with Prof. Dr. Kentaro Shimizu and Dr. Rie Shimizu-Inatsugi. Every second week.
- Since 04/2019 Teaching of a lecture on **Genetic Drift, Inbreeding, Migration, and Linkage** as part of a two-day introduction to Concepts of Evolutionary Biology for PhD students of the Zurich Life Science Graduate School, Switzerland. Once a year.
- Since 09/2018 Teaching of a seminar **Advanced Population Genetics** (Ecological Genetics, Coalescent Theory, Classic Papers in Evolutionary Genetics) for MSc students in Biology at the University of Zurich, and PhD students of the Zurich Life Science Graduate School, Switzerland. Once a year.
- Since 09/2018 Co-teaching of course **Scientific Writing for Organismal Biologists** for MSc students in Biology at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, with Dr. Ursina Tobler and Dr. Jasmin Winkler (until 2019). Once a year.
- 03/2017–05/2017 Assisted in course **Evolutionary Genomics and Population Genetics** for BSc and MSc students at the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, University of Bern, Switzerland, with Prof. Dr. Laurent Excoffier.
- 04/2015–06/2015 Teaching of course **Mathematical Techniques in Evolution and Ecology** for PhD students and postdocs, including a hands-on introduction to Wolfram *Mathematica* at the Center for Population Biology, University of California Davis, United States.
- 11/2014–12/2014 Co-teaching of course **Population Biology – Section Mutation and Natural Selection** for PhD students at the Center for Population Biology, University of California Davis, with Prof. Dr. Graham Coop.

- 10/2013–12/2013 Co-teaching of seminar **Theoretical and Empirical Approaches in Population Genetics** for MSc and PhD students at the University of Vienna, Austria, with Dr. Günter Gollmann.
- 03/2006–03/2007 Assistance in course **Vertebrate Taxonomy and Systematics** for BSc students at the University of Zurich, with Dr. Johann Hegelbach.
- 01/2004–07/2005 Tutoring in Biology Minor **Biomathematics for Biologists** for BSc students at the University of Zurich, with PD Dr. Malgorzata Roos.

Supervision and Coaching

- Since 08/2023 **Postdoc Dr. Sambhavana Chauhan** at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich, Switzerland.
- 03/2023–07/2023 **Technical Assistant Dr. Mathieu Robin** at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich, Switzerland.
- 11/2022–03/2023 **Technical Assistant Dr. Isabel Schumacher** at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich, Switzerland.
- 11/2022 **Technical Assistant Dr. Enrique Rayo** at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich, Switzerland.
- 06/2021–05/2021 **Software Developer Ahmet Ercan Batirel** at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich, Switzerland.
- Since 01/2021 **PhD student Donikë Sejdiu** at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, and the Institute of Evolutionary Medicine, University of Zurich, Switzerland, co-supervised with Prof. Dr. Verena Schünemann from the Institute of Evolutionary Medicine, University of Zurich.
- Since 01/2021 **PhD student Alex Plüss** at the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology, University of Zurich, Switzerland, co-advised with Prof. Dr. Grossniklaus from the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology, University of Zurich.
- Since 01/2021 **PhD student Elisabeth Authier** at the Department of Systematic and Evolutionary Botany, University of Zurich, Switzerland, co-advised with Dr. Frachon from the Department of Systematic and Evolutionary Botany, University of Zurich.
- Since 01/2019 **PhD student Thomas Grubinger** at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich.
- Since 01/2014 **Member of the PhD Advisory Board / Committee** of the following current and former PhD students (in alphabetical order): Epifanía Arango Isaza (University of Zurich), Ramon Dallo (University of Zurich), Debbie Leigh (University of Zurich), Peter Rešutík (University of Zurich), Sidra Tul Muntaha (Technical University of Munich).
- 03/2022–07/2022 **MSc student Jonas Bucher**, supervised during a 5-month lab rotation at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich, as part of Jonas's 'Joint Degree MSc ETH UZH Unibas Computational Biology and Bioinformatics'. Current status: MSc student.
- 07/2019–08/2019 **BSc student Berkay Günay** from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Middle East Technical University, Turkey, supervised during a 7-week internship on the effect of background selection on site-frequency spectra at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich. Current status: unknown.
- 10/2018–12/2018 **PhD student Martin Pontz** from the Department of Mathematics, University of Vienna Austria, supervised during a Research Internship on migration–selection models with epistasis at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich. Current status: Postdoc at the Faculty of Life Sciences, Tel Aviv University, Israel.
- 07/2018–08/2018 **BSc student Nico Giger**, supervised during his Research Internship in Evolutionary Biology and Systematics at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, University of Zurich. Current status: unknown.
- 01/2015–08/2016 **Postdoc Dr. Ivan Jurić** at the Department of Evolution and Ecology, University of

California Davis, United States, co-advised with Prof. Dr. Graham Coop. Current status: unknown.

Active Memberships in Scientific Societies

European Society for Evolutionary Biology (since 2011), Genetics Society (since 2012), Genetics Society of America (since 2012), Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution (since 2013), Swiss Botanical Society (since 2020), Swiss Society of Plant Biology (formerly Swiss Society of Plant Physiology; since 2021)

Organisation of Conferences and Outreach Activities

- 09/2021 Talk '**Cherries, ketchup and beefsteaks – How artificial is our food?**' (original German title: 'Kirschen, Ketchup und Ochsenherzen – Wie künstlich ist unsere Nahrung?'), Scientifica 2021, Zurich, Switzerland
- 06/2017 Co-organisation of the symposium "Integrating ancient and modern DNA" at the Conference of the Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution (SMBE) 2017, Austin, Texas, USA
- 06/2014 Co-organisation of the minisymposium "Multilocus Models in Structured Populations: Migration, Selection, and Recombination". at the 9th European Conference on Mathematical and Theoretical Biology (ECMTB), Gothenburg, Sweden
- 11/2006 Public talk '**Hunted, protected, managed – the balancing act of saving the Alpine ibex**' (original German title: 'Gejagt, geschützt, gehegt – Die Gratwanderung des Alpensteinbocks'), Weinfeld, Switzerland

Awards and Fellowships

- 09/2014–08/2016 **Advanced Postdoc Mobility Fellowship by the Swiss National Science Foundation.** 24 months at the University of California Davis, United States. \$109 200 (living, congress, and travelling costs). Role: Main applicant.
- 01/2008–09/2011 **Torrance Postgraduate Studentship**, awarded by the University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. 45 months. £ 24 000 (living costs, fees). Role: Main applicant.
- 06/2009 **Travel grant by the James Rennie Bequest**, University of Edinburgh, for the 6th Workshop on Bayesian Inference in Stochastic Processes, Bressanone, Italy. Role: Main applicant.
- 07/2008 **Travel grant by the James Rennie Bequest**, University of Edinburgh, for the 10th International Congress of Genetics, Berlin, Germany. Role: Main applicant.
- 01/2008–12/2008 **PhD stipend by the Janggen-Poehn Foundation**, St. Gallen, Switzerland. 12 months. CHF 5 000 (living costs). Role: Main applicant.
- 01/2008–12/2008 **PhD stipend by the Roche Research Foundation**, Basel, Switzerland. 12 months. CHF 30 000 (living costs). Role: Main applicant.

Publications

- Laetsch DR, Bisschop G, Martin SH, **Aeschbacher S**, Setter D, and Lohse K (2023) Demographically explicit scans for barriers to gene flow using gIMble. *PLoS Genetics*. doi: 10.1101/2022.10.27.514110 (preprint) *in press*
- Giesen A, Blanckenhorn WU, Schäfer MA, Shimizu KK, Shimizu-Inatsugi R, Misof B, Podsiadlowski L, Niehuis O, Lischer HLE, **Aeschbacher S**, and Kapun M (2023) Geographic variation in genomic signals of admixture between two closely related European sepsid fly species. *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*. doi: 10.1007/s11692-023-09612-5 *published online*

- Arango-Isaza E, Capodiferro MR, Aninao MJ, Babiker H, **Aeschbacher S**, Achilli A, Posth C, Campbell R, Martínez FI, Heggarty P, Sadowsky S, Shimizu KK, and Barbieri C (2023) The genetic history of the Southern Andes from present-day Mapuche ancestry. *Current Biology* 33(13):2602–2615.e5. doi: 10.1016/j.cub.2023.05.013
- Resutik P, **Aeschbacher S**, Krützen M, Kratzer A, Haas C, Phillips C, and Arora N (2023) Comparative evaluation of the MAPlex, Precision ID Ancestry Panel, and VISAGE Basic Tool for biogeographical ancestry inference. *Forensic Sci Int Genet* 64: 102850. doi: 10.1016/j.fsigen.2023.102850
- Pouyet F*, **Aeschbacher S***, Thiéry A, Excoffier L (2018) Background selection and biased gene conversion affect more than 95% of the human genome and bias demographic inferences. *eLife* 7: e36317. doi: 10.7554/eLife.36317. *Authors contributed equally.
- **Aeschbacher S** Selby JP, Willis JH, and Coop G (2017) Population-genomic inference of the strength and timing of selection against gene flow. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* 114 (27): 7061–7066. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1616755114
- Jurić I, **Aeschbacher S***, and Coop G* (2016) The strength of selection against Neanderthal introgression. *PLoS Genetics* 12 (11): e1006340. doi: 10.1371/journal.pgen.1006340 *Authors contributed equally.
- Yeaman S*, **Aeschbacher S***, and Bürger R (2016). The evolution of genomic islands by increased establishment probability of linked alleles. *Mol Ecol* 25 (11): 2542–2558. doi: 10.1111/mec.13611. *Authors contributed equally.
- **Aeschbacher S** and Bürger R (2014) The effect of linkage on establishment and survival of locally beneficial mutations. *Genetics* 197 (1): 317–336. doi: 10.1534/genetics.114.163477
- **Aeschbacher S**, Futschik A, and Beaumont MA (2013) Approximate Bayesian computation for modular inference problems with many parameters: the example of migration rates. *Mol Ecol* 22 (4): 987–1002. doi: 10.1111/mec.12165
- **Aeschbacher S**, Beaumont MA, and Futschik S (2012) A novel approach for choosing summary statistics in approximate Bayesian computation. *Genetics* 192 (3): 1027–1047. doi: 10.1534/genetics.112.143164

Peer Review

Reviewed manuscripts for The American Naturalist, BMC Evolutionary Biology, Genes Genomes Genetics (G3), Genetics, The Journal of Evolutionary Biology, Molecular Biology and Evolution, Molecular Ecology, Molecular Ecology Resources, Nature Ecology and Evolution, PLoS Genetics, PLoS One, and Theoretical Biology.

Publons Profile: <https://publons.com/researcher/328595/simon-aeschbacher>

Invited Talks

- 03/2021 **Exploring the limits to inferring speciation history from genome-scale data** (online). Botanical Colloquium at the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Basel, Switzerland. Invited by Prof. Dr. Yvonne Willi.
- 04/2019 **Making sense of variation in gene flow along the genome and across space and time.** Symposium at the Museum of Natural History of the National University of San Marcos (UNMSM), Lima, Peru. Invited by Dr. Asunción A. Cano Echevarría.
- 03/2019 **Understanding variation in gene flow along the genome and across time.** Seminar of the Department of Systematic and Evolutionary Botany, University of Zurich, Switzerland. Invited by Prof. Dr. Elena Conti.
- 03/2018 **Exploring speciation history through the joint inference of selection and gene flow.** Speciation Genomics Meeting, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. Invited by Prof. Dr. Chris Jiggins, Dr. Simon Martin, and Dr. Mark Ravinet.
- 11/2017 **Towards a parameterised genomic landscape of effective gene flow.** Seminar of the Institute of Evolutionary Biology, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. Invited by Dr. Konrad Lohse.

- 12/2016 **Genome-wide inference of selection against gene flow.** Ad-hoc seminar at the Division of Evolutionary Biology, Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, Germany. Invited by Prof. Dr. Jochen Wolf.
- 11/2015 **Detecting selection against gene flow: a complementary approach to F_{ST} outlier scans.** Population Genetics Seminar, University of Bern, Switzerland. Invited by Prof. Dr. Laurent Excoffier.
- 04/2014 **The effect of linkage on establishment and survival of locally beneficial mutations.** Behaviour, Ecology, Environment and Evolution Seminar, University of Zurich. Invited by Prof. Dr. Lukas F. Keller.
- 02/2011 **The fate of a domesticated allele in the wild: inference based on a drift–migration–selection model.** ETH Interaction Seminar, Zurich, Switzerland. Invited by Dr. Gabriel E Leventhal.
- 10/2010 **Choice of summary statistics for efficient rejection sampling in statistical population genetics.** Austrian Days of Statistics: Statistics in Genetics and Medicine, Vienna, Austria. Invited by Prof. Dr. Andreas Futschik.
- 08/2010 **Modelle in der Populationsgenetik: Das Schätzen von Migrationsraten beim Alpensteinbock in der Schweiz.** 5. Lysser Wildtiertage, Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Wildtierbiologie, Lyss, Switzerland. Invited by the Organising Committee.
- 03/2008 **And yet they move – individual-based simulation suggests gene flow in Alpine ibex.** Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Metapopulation Research Group, University of Helsinki, Finland. Invited by Prof. Dr. Ilkka Hanski.

Conferences and Workshops

- **Oral and poster contributions at national and international conferences**, including the Meeting of the Society of Molecular Biology and Evolution (SMBE), the Congress of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology (ESEB), Evolution, and the United Kingdom Population Genetics Group Meeting (PopGroup)
- **Member of the organising committee for the International Conference Evolution in Action 2023** in Monte Verità, Switzerland, from 11 to 15 June 2023. Curation of the symposium on Domestication and of the Workshop on Machine Learning.
- **Co-organisation of a symposium on Integrating Ancient and Modern DNA** at SMBE 2017 in Austin, Texas, United States, with Prof. Dr. Anna-Sapfo Malaspina (University of Lausanne, Switzerland) and Prof. Dr. Laurent Excoffier (University of Bern, Switzerland)
- **Co-organisation of a mini-symposium on Multilocus Models in Structured Populations: Migration, Selection, and Recombination** at the European Conference on Mathematical and Theoretical Biology (ECMTB) 2014 in Gothenburg, Sweden, with Dr. Ludwig Geroldinger (University of Vienna, Austria)
- **Contributions to workshops/symposia**, including the Bauhin 2022 Conference at the University of Basel, Switzerland; the SwissPLANT meeting; a symposium on New Methods and Discoveries in Human Archaic Admixture at the University of Zurich, Switzerland; the Bay Area Population Genetics (BAPG) meeting; the Jacques Monod Conference on Recent Advances on the Evolution of Sex and Genetic Systems, Roscoff, France; and a Workshop on Bayesian Inference in Stochastic Processes, Bressanone, Italy

Other Skills

Languages: Swiss German, German, English (TOEFL), French, basics in Spanish and Swedish
Programming: Mathematica, R, Java, Python, C++, bash