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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***NATURE* LISTS ECU BIOLOGIST'S PAPER AN "EVOLUTIONARY GEM"**

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Jan. 6, 2009) — A highly distinguished scientific journal, *Nature*, recently released a list of 15 papers published within the past decade that they consider to be "Evolutionary Gems," illustrating the "breadth, depth and power of evolutionary thinking." Ranked at number six among the 15 prestigious publications is "Natural Selection in Speciation," co-authored by East Carolina University biologist Dr. Jeff McKinnon.

"I am very pleased at this recognition, which I did not expect," said McKinnon. "I enjoy the fact that two of my former students are on the paper. This is a nice salute to their hard work."

Within their article, McKinnon and co-authors David Kingsley and Dolph Schluter, examine and confirm the evolutionary theory that divergent natural selection has a key role in speciation.

By studying a species of fish known as sticklebacks taken from Alaska, British Columbia, Iceland, the United Kingdom, Norway and Japan, McKinnon and his team were able to provide firm evidence that over time the fish have adapted to living in streams, and that they have evolved repeatedly from marine ancestors, or fish that previously lived in the ocean but returned to fresh water to spawn.

Prior to joining the faculty of ECU in August 2008, McKinnon taught at the University of Wisconsin in Whitewater. He now serves as chair of the Department of Biology in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences at ECU.

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