

# Evolution in Darwin's Tangled Bank: Tree, Coral, or Web of Life?

Join us for cocktail hour, dinner, **science quiz** (with prizes!), and a presentation by Distinguished Professor J. Peter Gogarten at the

## **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Darwin Day Dinner**

**A Celebration of Curiosity, Science, and Scientists**

In the final paragraph of *The Origin of Species*, Darwin contemplates a bank of land and all of the differing life forms that dwell on that bank—plants, birds, worms, etc. All of these various life forms were produced by the same set of natural laws. While the life forms are widely different from each other, they are also “dependent on each other in so complex a manner.” Dr. Gogarten will discuss the symbiotic relationships and genetic exchange between widely varying organisms.

Dr. Johann Peter Gogarten is a German-American biologist studying the early evolution of life. Born in Bad Oeynhausen, Germany, he studied plant physiology and membrane transport at the Universities of Tübingen and Giessen. In 1987 he moved to the US as a postdoc to work at the University of California at Santa Cruz. He currently is Distinguished Professor of Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT.

Gogarten was the first person to root the Tree of life (biology) using an ancient gene duplication. Gogarten's current focus is the evolution of homing endonuclease utilizing parasitic genetic elements (inteins) and the intertwining of selection occurring on the gene, population and the community level.

His interests are the early evolution of life, horizontal gene transfer and selfish genetic elements. Research in the Gogarten Lab at UCONN has been funded through the US National Science Foundation (NSF), the Israel-US Binational Science Foundation (BSF), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Exobiology program. He is best known for rooting the tree of life and for his early recognition of horizontal gene transfer as an important force in microbial evolution. Currently, a focus of his research is comparative genomics and horizontal gene transfer. He is also interested in the evolution of molecular parasites.



J. Peter Gogarten is a fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology and the International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life, a member of the CT Academy of Science and Engineering, and was selected as a recipient of a 2009 Fulbright scholarship.



**DARWIN DAY** is an international recognition of the importance of science to the advancement of human understanding of life and to human progress in our lives. It is held around Charles Darwin's birthday on February 12. It celebrates the discoveries and life of Darwin and the enormous benefits that scientific knowledge, acquired through human curiosity and ingenuity, has contributed to the advancement of our society.

**Date:** Saturday, Feb 7, 2026  
**Time:** 5 pm Cocktail Hour,  
6pm Dinner  
**At:** The Waters Edge at Giovanni's  
2748 Boston Post Road  
Darien, CT 06820  
**Price:** \$79 per person  
\$90 after January 16

Scan the QR Code to Register



Or Visit [www.DarwinDayCT.org](http://www.DarwinDayCT.org)

For more information, including special student pricing, alternative payment methods, and sponsorship opportunities contact Amy at [info@darwindayct.org](mailto:info@darwindayct.org)

*Sponsored and hosted by Humanists and Freethinkers of Fairfield County with support from Electric Vehicle Club of CT.*