

## **Language Evolution and the Origins of Language**

Convenor: George van Driem

On the 6th of January 1870, in the first issue of the scientific journal *Nature*, the Oxford linguist Friedrich Max Müller proposed that natural selection ‘among words and grammatical forms’ characterised language evolution. A year later Charles Darwin explicitly adopted Müller’s view in his *Descent of Man*, much as he had earlier embraced Alfred Russel Wallace’s idea of natural selection. In recent decades, new studies on language evolution have often stumbled upon important insights already set forth by earlier scholars such as Pierre de Maupertuis and Hugo Schuchardt. What are the newest developments in research on the origin of language? How do semiotics and theories of meaning contribute to our understanding of the emergence of language in our ancestors? How do today’s theories of language evolution clash, complement or dovetail with the newest insights on the nature of self and the emergence of the type of consciousness which we encounter in ourselves and other warm-blooded animals?