Some outcomes of the evolutionary race buck conventional wisdom (w/ video)

March 24 2011

Richard Lenski oversees the count of micorganisms growing in a Petri dish that was used in a study of evolution. Credit: Courtesy of Michigan State University

In some cases, less fit organisms may out-survive their in-shape counterparts, according to a study reported in the March 18 issue of *Science*. The finding surprised researchers who assumed less fit organisms would be the eventual losers in evolution's fight for survival.

Microbial Ecology professor Richard Lenski of Michigan State University conducted the study with funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Richard Lenski of Michigan State University explains how some evolutionary results buck the conventional wisdom. Credit: National Science Foundation/Michigan State University

Using easy-to-understand terms in a revealing video accompanying this release, Lenski describes his results and explains why his study is so unique.

"This remarkable long-term study continues to yield surprises, providing unprecedented detail on the richness and complexity of evolution," said Saran Twombly, a program manager in NSF's Division of Biological Infrastructure. "In this case, experiments reveal how and why the tradeoff between long-term success and short-term gain confers evolutionary success, providing evidence of a compromise long theorized to exist."

Provided by National Science Foundation