

REPORTS

## **Asymmetric Coevolutionary Networks Facilitate Biodiversity Maintenance**

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The mutualistic interactions between plants and their pollinators or seed dispersers have played a major role in the maintenance of Earth's biodiversity. To investigate how coevolutionary interactions are shaped within species-rich communities, we characterized the architecture of an array of quantitative, mutualistic networks spanning a broad geographic range. These coevolutionary networks are highly asymmetric, so that if a plant species depends strongly on an animal species, the animal depends weakly on the plant. By using a simple dynamical model, we showed that asymmetries inherent in coevolutionary networks may enhance long-term coexistence and facilitate biodiversity maintenance.

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/312/5772/431>