Evolutionary sparse learning with paired species contrast reveals the 5 **shared genetic basis of convergent traits** 6

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Cases abound in which nearly identical traits have appeared in distant species facing similar environments. These unmistakable examples of adaptive evolution offer opportunities to gain insight into their genetic origins and mechanisms through comparative analyses. Here, we present a novel comparative genomics approach to build genetic models that underlie the independent origins of convergent traits using evolutionary sparse learning. We test the hypothesis that common genes and sites are involved in the convergent evolution of two key traits: C4 photosynthesis in grasses and echolocation in mammals. Genetic models were highly predictive of independent cases of convergent evolution of C4 photosynthesis. These results support the involvement of sequence substitutions in many common genetic loci in the evolution of convergent traits studied. Genes contributing to genetic models for echolocation were highly enriched for functional categories related to hearing, sound perception, and deafness (*P* **< 10-6); a pattern that has eluded previous efforts applying standard molecular evolutionary approaches. We conclude that phylogeny-informed machine learning naturally excludes apparent molecular convergences due to shared species history, enhances the signal-to-noise ratio for detecting molecular convergence, and empowers the discovery of common genetic bases of trait convergences.**

46 Organisms continuously adapt to their natural environment. Under similar environmental 47 conditions, the same adaptations may evolve independently in clades across the tree of life. For 48 example, the convergent evolution of the ability to echolocate in some bats and toothed whales 49 is an example of adaptation brought on by major transitions to new environments requiring 50 similar physiological innovations. Evolutionary biologists have long sought the common genetic 51 basis of these convergent adaptations under the hypothesis that the same pathways, genes, and/or base substitutions are involved in these adaptations. However, "*the extent to which convergent traits evolve by similar genetic and molecular pathways is not clear*" [1](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/GqO6T) . Despite many molecular evolutionary investigations, the strongest evidence for molecular convergence thus 55 far appears to be a marginally significant (FDR-corrected $P = 0.0486$) enrichment of sound perception genes in which convergent and parallel amino acid substitutions were observed²⁻⁴. Although these results hint at the possible presence of some shared genetic basis in the evolution of echolocation in independent clades, some studies could not detect such an enrichment^{[3](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/bQdV)}, 59 casting doubt on the robustness of the results, the general applicability of the methodology, or 60 even the presence of a common genetic basis.

The lack of consistent and statistically significant results may be due to insufficient commonality 61 62 in the genetic bases of these traits, i.e., different genes and different sites may perform similar 63 functions in independent clades. Alternatively, the lack of sufficient statistical power or inability to 64 fully exclude non-adaptive convergence may be hampering efforts to detect genes and sites 65 associated with the evolution of convergent traits⁵⁻⁷. Furthermore, current state-of-the-art approaches primarily reveal retrospective patterns, but they do not explicitly model quantitative 66 67 genetic changes in convergent trait evolution to make statistical predictions of the presence or 68 absence of the convergent trait.

We have addressed these challenges by building predictive genetic models of convergent trait 69 70 evolution using evolutionary sparse learning (ESL). ESL is supervised machine learning in which genomic components (e.g., genes and sites) are model parameters, and substitutions in 71 72 multiple sequence alignments are observations^{[8](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/B1DX)}. We developed a paired species contrast (PSC) 73 design to select the training data for machine learning to automatically mask neutral 74 (background) sequence convergence that can lead to spurious inferences and reduce the power 75 to detect the genetic basis of convergence^{[5,6,9](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/25ax+Ya4Sr+pH6MG)}. Importantly, ESL-PSC simultaneously considers 76 all genetic loci and their respective substitutions during computational analysis, eliminating 77 biases due to arbitrary evolutionary conservation thresholds and convergent substitution cut-offs 78 necessary in some other approaches^{[2,3,7,10,11](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/bQdV+xChbR+A9PL6+aQHkS+x5Fx)}.

ESL-PSC produces a quantitative genetic model to predict the presence/absence of a 79 80 convergent trait in any species based on its genome sequence. This is needed to test the 81 biological hypothesis of commonality of genetic basis in the independent evolution of the same 82 trait. Lists of loci comprising the genetic model can be subjected to additional analysis to test if 83 there is an enrichment of functional categories relevant to the trait analyzed^{[12,13](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/w6tA+Q4OD)}. This approach 84 is commonly used to establish the biological relevance of candidate loci derived from 85 large-scale scans for molecular convergence in the absence of alternatives^{2-4,9,14-16}. We applied 86 ESL-PSC to build genetic models of convergent evolution of C4 photosynthesis in grasses and 87 of echolocation in mammals because they have been extensively investigated previously^{4,17-22}.

ESL-PSC for building genetic models of convergent traits 88

89 We introduce ESL-PSC with an analysis of protein sequence alignments of chloroplast proteins, 90 which are well-suited for demonstrating the predictive ability of the method in a range of grass 91 species that have acquired C4 photosynthesis independently. One may alternatively use ESL-PSC for nucleotide sequence alignments with the option to group sites into exons, introns, 92

or other types of domains and functional annotations, as described in the *Material and Methods* 93 94 section.

ESL uses logistic regression to infer a genetic model that can predict trait-positive and 95 96 trait-negative species, which we numerically encode as $+1$ and -1 , respectively^{[8,23](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/IIhia+B1DX)}. In this 97 analysis, the Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator (LASSO) compares alternative 98 genetic models by imposing penalties for including additional amino acid positions and genes 99 into the model while seeking high prediction accuracy. ESL-PSC produces models that 100 incorporate only those proteins whose member sites make a significant contribution to the ability 101 of the genetic model to classify species according to their traits rather than their ancestry.

102 To train the ESL model, we use a paired species contrast (PSC) approach in which a balanced 103 training dataset of equal numbers of trait-positive and trait-negative species (those with and 104 without the trait of interest, respectively) is first selected such that for every trait-positive 105 species, we include one closely-related trait-negative species. In PSC, species pairs are 106 required to be from evolutionarily independent clades to avoid introducing evolutionary 107 correlations among pairs due to shared evolutionary history, which is known to cause spurious 108 associations^{[5,6,9](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/25ax+Ya4Sr+pH6MG)}. As an example, we could select trait-positive species A_1 and D_1 and 109 trait-negative species B₁ and C, respectively, to satisfy the above conditions (Fig. 1A).

110 PSC selection of training data ensures that the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) of each 111 trait-positive and trait-negative species pair selected will be more recent than the MRCA of 112 either member of the pair with any of the other species in the analysis. In the above example, 113 the MRCA of A_1 and B_1 (Y) is more recent than that of A_1 and F (W). Also, ESL-PSC 114 automatically excludes all branches in the phylogeny that are unrelated to the evolution of the 115 convergent trait (dotted branches in Fig. 1A). This means that the model learning is directly 116 focused on the molecular evolutionary changes between trait-positive and trait-negative species 117 (solid blue and red branches, respectively). If there are multiple species in some trait-positive 118 and trait-negative clades, different combinations of training sets may be used to build separate genetic models followed by model averaging (see *Material and Methods*). ESL-PSC analysis 119 120 produces a list of proteins included in the genetic model, the estimated relative importance of 121 each locus, and an equation to predict the presence/absence of the trait in a species based on 122 its genetic sequences. Species not used for training for a given model can be utilized for testing 123 the model.

Figure 1. The paired species contrast (PSC) design. **A**: An example phylogeny with one set of selected species (solid blue and red lines). Extraneous lineages (black dotted lines) and shared evolutionary history (gray dotted lines). **B**: A schematic depiction of the four species selected for ESL-PSC analysis. In the ESL experiment, the response variable refers to the binary phenotype, where +1 represents the convergent trait, and -1 represents the ancestral trait.

Genetic Models for Convergent Acquisition of C4 Photosynthesis 143

We applied ESL-PSC to build genetic models of photosynthesis evolution using a 64-species 144 145 alignment of 67 chloroplast proteins^{[22](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/tWY9)} (see Material and Methods). Many of these grass species 146 have convergently evolved the C4 photosynthetic pathway for carbon concentration^{[24,25](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/nklLg+Aiz1r)}, while 147 others have retained the ancestral C3 photosynthetic pathway. Previous studies of the genetic of C4 evolution have found convergent amino acid substitutions in Ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase-oxygenase (RuBisCo) to be strongly associated with C4 149 150 evolution, but Casola and Li^{[22](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/tWY9/?noauthor=1)} have recently suggested the involvement of other chloroplast 151 proteins as well. However, the extent to which chloroplast proteins other than RuBisCo 152 represent a predictable and common evolutionary basis of C4 evolution remains uncertain. 148 basis

153 There are six clades in the molecular phylogeny that contain sibling species of both C4 and C3 154 phenotypes (Fig. 2), which yielded six pairs of species satisfying the PSC design. Each pair 155 contained a species with C4 photosynthesis and its most closely related species with C3 156 photosynthesis. Because some clades contain multiple candidate trait-positive (C4) and 157 trait-negative (C3) species, we selected the species with the least missing data in the sequence 158 alignment in our first analysis (solid lines in Fig. 2). The lengths of individual protein sequence 159 alignments varied from 30 to 1,528 amino acids, with a total of 16,362 positions in 67 160 chloroplast proteins^{[22](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/tWY9)}.

Figure 2. ESL-PSC modeling of convergent acquisition of C4 photosynthesis. A. Experimental design. An evolutionary tree of 64 grass species based on the phylogeny in Casola and Li 22 22 22 . From the 64 available species, 6 pairs of trait-positive (C4) and trait-negative (C3) species were chosen according to the PSC approach. Where multiple species met the topological requirements for a contrast pair, we selected the two species that were closest in the evolutionary distance and that had the fewest gaps in the alignments. Selected species are shown as solid line branches, and all other branches are depicted as dashed lines. Solid lines begin at the internal node that represents the common ancestor of each pair, and the black (C4) and red (C3) branches represent the unshared ancestry of each selected species. Thus substitutions on these branches can be included in ESL-PSC modeling. Blue (C4) and red (C3) dashed lines represent alternative sibling species of the selected species. Black dashed branches represent clades that are evolutionarily independent of the contrast pairs. These include both C4 and C3 species. Gray branches represent the evolutionary history that is shared equally by selected C4 and C3 species, which we expect to cancel out automatically in the modeling process.

201 In ESL-PSC analysis, sparsity penalties must be specified for the inclusion of sites and proteins 202 in the genetic model built using LASSO. These penalties dictate the number of proteins and 203 sites allowed in the genetic model^{[8](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/B1DX)}. We used a series of penalties and compared resulting 204 genetic models by using a newly developed Model Fit Score (MFS), which is analogous to the 205 Brier score in logistic regression (see Methods). The genetic model with the best MFS contained 206 included RuBisCo, consistent with previous experimental and analytical knowledge^{[20,22,26,27](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/tWY9+F2kzz+7w2J8+QCegN/?noauthor=0,0,0,0)}. This 207 model correctly assigned all six C4 and six C3 species used to train the model and correctly 208 predicted 97% of the other C4 species in this dataset (36 of 37) and 100% of C3 species (15 of

209 15) for a balanced accuracy of 98.5%. An ensemble of genetic models with similar MFS scores (**Fig. 3**) also performed equally well (**Fig. 4A**). 210

Figure 3 Heat map of Model Fit Scores. 20 values for each inclusion penalty (site and protein) were sampled from a logspace ranging from 1-99% of the maximum non-trivial penalty. A higher MFS suggests a higher risk of overfitting. Models with the best (lowest) 5% of MFS are included in predictive ensembles (Fig. 4, 5).

The best MFS model was found to be equally accurate in predicting C4 species that are siblings 226 227 of those used in the training set, which suggests that multiple C4 species within a clade 228 inherited the trait from a common ancestor. This is consistent with the parsimonious 229 reconstruction of independent C4 trait evolution^{[28](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/gVNc)}. For this reason, genetic models built using different species combinations were also highly accurate (96%, **Fig. 5B**). The best MSF models 230 231 were also highly predictive of the C4/C3 status of species from independent clades (black dotted branches in **Fig. 2**) that did not contribute any species for training the model (100% 232 233 accuracy; Fig. 4B). This result suggests that many of the same substitutions contributed to C4 234 evolution independently.

 235 In addition, we found that evolutionarily-naive machine learning, which did not use the PSC 236 design, could only achieve 64% accuracy in correctly identifying C4 species in the independent 237 clades (black branches in Fig. 2). In this experiment, we conducted a direct comparison by 238 selecting 100 input sets of six C4 and six C3 species from among the siblings of the PSC 239 species, but without respecting the PSC design. For these "naive" models, the prediction 240 accuracy fell considerably. In particular, the average true positive rate (TPR), a measure of the 241 ability of the model to recognize C4 species on the basis of information in convergent sites, was 242 only 64% over all of these ensembles compared with 94% for the ensembles built using the PSC approach (**Fig. 4B**). This reduction in accuracy reflects the fact that non-PSC models may 243 244 incorporate not only sites whose residues are correlated with the phenotype due to convergent 245 evolution but also sites correlated with the phenotype purely due to shared ancestry within the

246 inputs. The latter type of sites carries no information relevant to the prediction of phenotype in 247 clades whose trait-positive species have acquired the trait independently. This result establishes 248 that our PSC design can produce much better genotype-phenotype models than naive machine 249 learning.

Figure 4. Predictive ability of ESL-PSC genetic models of C4/C3 photosynthesis. A-D Sequence 250 251 prediction scores (SPS) from model ensembles are shown for known C4 (blue) and C3 (red) species in 252 kernel density estimation plots. Negative SPS indicates a prediction of the C3 phenotype (trait-negative), 253 and positive SPS indicates a prediction of the C4 phenotype. Predictions shown are for all species (A), 254 species in clades independent of the clades contributing species for model training (B). Response-flipped 255 null ESL-PSC models of C4/C3 photosynthesis (C). Null models were constructed by flipping the 256 phenotype response values of 3 out of 6 of the input contrast pairs. This was done for all 10 distinct 257 combinations of 3 out of 6 contrast pairs, and all model predictions were aggregated. SPSs from the best 5% of models by MFS are included. Pair-randomized null ESL-PSC models of C4/C3 photosynthesis (D)**.** 258 Null models were constructed by randomly flipping or not flipping the residues between each species 259 260 contrast pair at every variable residue in the MSA. For each of the 25 alternative PSC input species 261 combinations, randomized pair-flipped alignments were generated, and model ensembles were produced 262 for each. Aggregated predictions are shown.

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264 Studies of convergence in C4 have focused heavily on RuBisCo, the most abundant enzyme, 265 which has multiple sites of convergent amino acid substitutions in multiple different lineages of 266 plants^{[20–22,26,29](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/F2kzz+OBEew+tWY9+QCegN+vusQF)}. However, we tested the hypothesis that other chloroplast proteins also 267 contributed to C4 evolution by building ESL-PSC models excluding RuBisCo and testing model 268 accuracy in predicting the presence of C4. The RuBisCo-free models had 89% accuracy,

suggesting that the convergent basis of the C4 trait extends to other chloroplast genes (**Fig. 5a**). 269 270 Interestingly, these models correctly predicted C4 photosynthesis in Alloteropsis angusta, which was the only false negative for the model containing RuBisCo. *A. angusta* is known to have 271 272 undergone a C3 to C4 transition independently from the other members of its own genus, 273 including A. paniculata^{[30](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/2ibKp)}. We found A. angusta to be lacking key amino acid substitutions in 274 RuBisCo that are highly diagnostic of other C4 species. Therefore, chloroplast proteins other 275 than RuBisCo have likely contributed significantly to C4 evolution in this case, and more 276 generally. While Casola and Li^{[22](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/tWY9/?noauthor=1)} hinted at such a possibility, their statistical analyses using a 277 convergence counting approach did not find a significant excess of convergent substitutions in 278 C4 species as compared to the background C3 species. Therefore, the ESL-PSC framework 279 provided a powerful new way to investigate the genetics of convergent traits and test 280 hypotheses that have not been possible until now.

Figure 5. Alternative models. A: Predictions from models developed without the inclusion of RuBisCo are shown for independent species. **B:** Alternative PSC combinations**.** 100 alternative species combinations of PSC pairs were generated, and ensemble models were constructed as above. Predictions were aggregated for only the independent clades (black branches in **Fig. 2**). SPSs from the best 5% of models by MFS are shown from the aggregate of all ensemble models.

Convergent Evolution of Echolocation 301

302 The independent acquisition of echolocation in bats and whales is among the most well-studied cases of convergent molecular and trait evolution. We selected the microbat *Myotis lucifugus* 303 and the bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* as trait-positive species (echolocators) because 304 305 previous studies involving exome-scale searches for convergence in echolocating mammals 306 have often focused on the comparison of microbats and toothed whales^{[2,3,9,31](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/LK6Wx+25ax+x5Fx+bQdV/?noauthor=0,0,0,0)}. In the PSC

design, we selected a non-echolocating sister species *Pteropus vampyrus* (megabat) for 307 echolocating *Myotis lucifugus* and non-echolocating *Ovis aries* (sheep) for echolocating 308 bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* (**Fig. 6;** see *Methods*). We retrieved 14,509 protein 309 310 alignments from the OrthoMaM database of orthologous protein-coding sequences for 311 mammalian genomes 32 32 32 .

Figure 6. Echolocation analysis. Echolocation evolved twice in mammals in our dataset. Therefore two 312 313 contrast pairs can be constructed (solid blue branches, echolocating; solid red branches, 314 non-echolocating). A series of 15 comparable sets of input pairs can be constructed by using alternative 315 species (dashed blue and red sibling species) in all possible combinations. Species not included in the 316 contrast pairs do not affect the analysis (black dashed branches). Shared ancestry is canceled out (gray 317 branches).

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319 Because there were only two clades, and thus only two species pairs, we made inferences from a collection of ESL models obtained using a range of sparsity penalties (see *Methods*) and 320 species combinations (**Fig. 6**). The collection of genetic models was then used to generate a 321 322 ranked list of candidate proteins associated with convergent evolution (Table S1). Among the 323 highest-ranked proteins, many were those previously characterized to have signatures of 324 molecular convergence in echolocators, including, Prestin (SLC26a5), TMC1, PJVK (DFNB59), 325 CDH23, CASQ1, and CABP2 $3,17,18,33-35$. In some cases, specific amino acid sites within these 326 proteins have been implicated in conferring the functional changes necessary for the 327 echolocation phenotype, revealed by laboratory assays where mutations to residues found in 328 echolocating species were observed to alter protein function in a manner consistent with 329 echolocation $3,19$.

We generated multiple-tests adjusted *P*-values to gauge the functional enrichment in the 330 331 top-ranking proteins included in the genetic models. We tested for \sim 20,000 biological processes

and phenotypes (see *Methods*) and found the top 100 proteins to be highly enriched for the 332 "sensory perception of sound" genes (GO:0007605) with an adjusted *P*-value < 10-4 (**Table 1**). 333 334 This is an improvement in the statistical significance of more than two orders of magnitude 335 compared to the best previous findings of this term (adjusted $P = 0.049$) in FDR-corrected 336 analyses^{[4,31](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/gH3r+LK6Wx/?noauthor=0,0)}. Our enrichment P-value was highly significant even for 50, 150, and 200 top 337 proteins in the genetic models ($P < 10^{-3}$), suggesting that our results are robust to the size of the 338 gene list analyzed.

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Table 1. Ontology term enrichments. Enrichment tests were performed for Gene, Phenotype, and 340 Disease ontology terms for the top 100 highest-ranking trait proteins in our echolocation multiple species 341 342 combination ensemble model integration analysis. In each figure, the 10 ontology terms with the lowest 343 p-values are shown from each enrichment analysis.

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345 This top-100 gene list was also significantly enriched (adjusted $P < 1 \times 10^{-6}$) for many Phenotype 346 Ontology (PO) terms directly related to hearing and sound perception such as "cochlear inner 347 hair cell degeneration" (MP:0004398), "increased or absent threshold for auditory brainstem 348 response" (MP:0011967), "cochlear ganglion degeneration" (MP:0002857), and "increased or absent threshold for auditory brainstem response" (MP:0011967) (**Table 1**). We also found a 349 350 highly significant enrichment (adjusted $P < 4.5 \times 10^{-3}$) for the top-level mammalian PO term 351 "hearing/vestibular/ear phenotype" (MP:0005377).

352 As a control, we built null genetic models in which one of the two contrast pairs had its trait 353 status reversed, such that the echolocating dolphin and non-echolocating large flying fox were 354 treated as sharing a convergent trait, while the other two species were treated as paired 355 contrast partners. This configuration has the property that both the shared phylogenetic signal 356 and any shared convergent trait signal from the genuine trait of echolocation are canceled out. 357 Then, we applied GO and PO enrichment to the top 100 genes in the ESL-PSC models as above. None of the terms in **Table 1** received significant enrichment (adjusted *P* < 0.05), as 358 359 expected of the null model. A recent study found that the analysis of synonymous variation can 360 360 help detect data contamination and other types of error 36 , so we developed another null test of 361 ESL-PSC by analyzing only fourfold degenerate sites expected to evolve largely neutrally in 362 mammals. No significant enrichment was found for any of the relevant ontology categories.

363 Overall, highly significant probabilities for the enrichment of hearing-related ontology terms 364 suggest that machine learning detects a strong signal of convergence in hearing-related 365 proteins in echolocators. This is the first demonstration of a multiple test-adjusted highly 366 significant signal for sound perception in a genome-wide comparative analysis of echolocation.

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DISCUSSION 368

369 Discovery of genotype-phenotype relationships is of central importance in functional and 370 evolutionary genomics. Repeated evolution of the same trait in species of independent clades 371 offers an opportunity to reveal the genetic architecture shared by these independent trait 372 evolutions. We have presented a novel comparative genomics approach using machine learning 373 (ESL-PSC), informed by molecular phylogenies, to infer quantitative genetic models of trait 374 convergences. The application of ESL-PSC to two distinct, previously well-investigated 375 examples establishes that there is a significant commonality in the genetic basis of trait 376 evolution among species in independent lineages.

377 A high predictive ability of ESL-PSC was found for correctly classifying species with and without C4 photosynthesis in grass clades not involved in training the model (**Fig. 4A, B**). Classical 378 379 molecular evolutionary methods do not commonly afford this type of quantitative prediction. The 380 high accuracy of genetic models of C4 trait evolution in which the well-studied convergent 381 protein RuBisCo was excluded is suggestive of the potential role of additional chloroplast 382 proteins in the convergent gain of C4 photosynthesis. These analyses also showed that not all 383 species with convergent traits harbor the same substitutions in the sites included in genetic 384 modes. In fact, no more than four out of six C4 species shared the same amino acid residue in 385 the sites selected during ESL model building. Therefore, ESL model building can automatically 386 extract relevant information from incomplete molecular convergence correlated with the trait convergence, obviating the need to use *ad hoc* cut-offs and subsetting data by evolutionary 387 388 conservation^{[2,3,5,7,37](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/xChbR+bQdV+x5Fx+CEx00+Ya4Sr)}. This makes ESL-PSC convergent evolution analyses less subjective and 389 more reproducible than other approaches.

ESL-PSC also identified genes involved in the convergent acquisition of echolocation in 390 391 mammals. The list of top genes in ESL models was found to be highly enriched for GO and PO categories involved in auditory processes at FDR-corrected *P*-values that were more significant 392 393 than previously reported, implying that the machine learning approach to building genetic 394 models can be significantly more powerful than previous approaches. While validation of ESL-PSC derived from the enrichment of functional categories is arguably circumstantial, direct 395 396 experimental approaches are beyond the scope of this investigation. Further support may be 397 found by assessing the potential functional relevance of the selected genes to determine 398 whether mutations in them cause diseases due to relevant functional disruptions. In the analysis 399 of Disease Ontology categories, we found a hearing-related "Sensorineural hearing loss, 400 bilateral" term to be highly enriched in the top genes (adjusted $P < 10^{-5}$). Many other terms related to deafness contained a significantly greater than expected number of genes (**Table 1**). 401 402 No previous study has reported such an enrichment.

403 ESL-PSC appears to extract commonalities of the genetic basis of trait convergences more 404 effectively than other approaches. However, we note that species-specific evolutionary 405 substitutions may also be involved in the evolution of convergent traits. These are not the target 406 of the ESL approach and will not be included in the genetic model. Also, molecular 407 convergences in the non-coding sequences as well as regulatory innovations may be involved 408 in the evolution of convergent traits some of which may be analyzed by their simultaneous 409 analysis in the ESL-PSC framework. We plan to pursue them in the future.

410 We expect ESL-PSC to be useful as a comparative genomics tool for uncovering common 411 genetic elements involved in the evolution of traits shared between species. We envision that 412 ESL-PSC will be applied to first generate a candidate gene and site list, which can be followed 413 by a series of hypothesis tests regarding the commonality of the genetic basis of trait 414 convergences. These analyses will be extremely fast, as ESL-PSC took only minutes in most of 415 our data analyses. These results can then be followed up by conducting traditional molecular

416 evolutionary analyses and functional genomic experiments to identify selective processes at 417 play.

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Contributions 553

S.K. conceived the idea and developed the initial method; J.A. and S.S. refined and extended 554 555 the method; M.S., S.S, J.A., and R.P. implemented the method; J.A. and R.P. conducted the 556 data analyses; J.A., S.K., and G.G. wrote the manuscript; all authors contributed to intellectual 557 discussions about the method and results and co-wrote the manuscript.

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Ethics declarations 563

Competing interests 564

565 The authors declare no competing interests.

Methods 567

568 Genomic alignment data retrieval and processing. Alignments of chloroplast genes were 569 retrieved from the supplemental data in ref.^{[22](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/tWY9/?noauthor=1)}. We generated translated amino acid sequences 570 from the provided nucleic acid alignments for ESL-PSC analyses. The OrthoMaM data set^{[32](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/tk7XH)} of 571 mammalian one-to-one orthologous protein sequence alignments was downloaded from 572 <https://orthomam.mbb.cnrs.fr/>. Following previous studies in which exome-scale scans for 573 convergence in echolocating mammals were performed, we analyzed echolocation in microbats 574 and toothed whales^{2-4,9,31} and used megabats and artiodactyls as non-echolocating sister 575 taxa^{[2,5,6,9](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/x5Fx+25ax+Ya4Sr+pH6MG/?noauthor=0,0,0,0)}. In their ESL-PSC analysis, we excluded sites containing missing data or alignment 576 gaps in individual training sets. All multiple sequence alignments (MSAs) were one-hot 577 encoded^{[8](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/B1DX)}, which transforms it into a numerical format that is required by the model-building 578 algorithm. The presence of the convergent trait was represented numerically by +1 and its 579 absence by -1.

580 Building Genetic Models. ESL-PSC uses the Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator 581 (LASSO)^{[23](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/IIhia)} logistic regression, in which coefficients are chosen to minimize a combination of the 582 difference between observed and predicted response values of the input species (the logistic 583 loss). It uses an inclusion penalty term that scales with the sum of the absolute values of the

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 584 584 584 model coefficients and, therefore, induces sparsity⁸. We use bilevel sparsity in which separate 585 penalties are applied for the inclusion of sites and groups of sites (e.g., proteins). The loss 586 function is minimized by gradient descent 38 , which is re-implemented in the myESL software 587 package used for ESL-PSC implementation ([https://github.com/kumarlabgit/ESL-PSC](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgithub.com%2Fkumarlabgit%2FESL-PSC&data=05%7C01%7Cjohn.allard%40temple.edu%7C6163c3ad3ea24b3d16a808db24b44b82%7C716e81efb52244738e3110bd02ccf6e5%7C0%7C0%7C638144128998516410%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=bIeCjSGh1aF3jqSn%2FeCeRgY6oaEC8WPCbSz6sJ51w%2BQ%3D&reserved=0)). We 588 estimate a new Model Fit Score (MFS) for a given genetic model, which is the root mean 589 squared difference between the input trait value (+1 and -1) and predicted trait values for all species used for training the model. The best-fit genetic models have the lowest MFS value, i.e., 590 591 the input and output of the genetic model are the most concordant. This is needed because 592 optimal inclusion penalties are not known beforehand in LASSO. So, the genetic model with the 593 best MFS is chosen.

594 In our analysis, the size of the penalty for each protein (group of sites) was globally controlled 595 by the inclusion penalties, but can also vary for each individual group depending on its composition. Group penalties in applications of the LASSO method are typically based on the 596 597 square root of the number of columns belonging to the group in dataset^{[39](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/8rlmK)}. Applying this system 598 produced models in which proteins with fewer variable sites and lower total entropy were 599 penalized more than those with many variable sites, in the exome-wide analysis. However, 600 highly conserved proteins containing even a few variable sites can be important. Therefore, we 601 devised a penalty function for each protein in which the group penalty scales linearly with the 602 number of variable sites plus a constant equal to the median number of variable sites across the 603 proteins in the dataset (excluding fully invariant proteins). This function was effective for both small-scale (chloroplast exome) and large-scale (mammalian proteome) analyses. 604

605 Predictive Model Ensembles. Models with similar MFS scores were combined to form 606 ensembles of models for predictions. For all model ensembles, we used a range of group and 607 site inclusion penalty values from 1%-99% of the maximum penalty that can be applied before a 608 trivial solution in which all model feature weights are set to 0 is obtained. The inclusion penalty 609 values were taken from a logspace over this range. Unless specified, we selected genetic models with the best MFS or those with the top-5% MFS values. 610

Building the Candidate protein list. We estimate the Group Sparsity Score (GSS) for every 611 612 selected protein in every model over all inclusion penalty combinations. GSS is the sum of 613 absolute values of regression coefficients for all the selected positions in the given protein^{[8](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/B1DX)}. The 614 higher the GSS, the greater their importance. Proteins not included in the genetic model receive 615 GSS = 0. For every candidate gene, their overall rank is the best rank (according to their GSS) 616 they receive in any of the genetic models, with equally ranked proteins being further ordered 617 according to the maximum GSS they attained in any model. This yields an ordered list of 618 proteins whose convergent sites stand out compared with the rest of the proteome in number, proportion, and strength of the concordance of their convergent site patterns with the species 619 620 phenotypes, without privileging any one of those considerations.

When each of the input species has at least one sibling species that share its phenotype for the 621 622 trait being studied, then different combinations of these allowable input species can be used 623 interchangeably, and models over all inclusion penalty combinations can be built for each of the species combinations. The output candidate convergent proteins are then ranked by the number 624 625 of species combinations for which they received non-zero GSS scores in at least one model, 626 with ties being resolved by the number of species combinations in which the proteins were 627 ranked in the top 1%, followed by the highest ever rank and highest ever GSS obtained.

628 Ontology analysis. Ontology enrichment testing was performed using Enrichr^{[40](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/xXLvg)}, and P-values 629 were adjusted for multiple testing. Gene ontologies were obtained from GO^{[41](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/ZEaOB)}. We tested for the 630 biological process GO ontologies using the GO_Biological_Process_2021 set in Enrichr (6,036 631 terms). Phenotype ontologies were derived from MGI^{[42](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/naL4J)}. Enrichr provides PO testing using a 632 trimmed version of the MGI phenotype vocabulary. Which excludes the top three levels of PO 633 terms (4,601 terms). Disease ontologies were derived from DisGeNet (9,828 terms)^{[43](https://paperpile.com/c/IylWFL/s6vwM)}. To 634 determine enrichment and overlapping genes for the top-level PO term "hearing/ vestibular/ ear 635 phenotype" (MP:0005377), we used the MouseMine 44 ontology testing tool and the 636 Benjamini-Hochberg adjustment to obtain a multiple testing adjusted P-value. By common 637 convention, enrichments were only considered valid if accounted for by an overlap of at least 5 638 genes. Phenotype ontology terms were retrieved from the Mouse Genome Informatics mammalian phenotype vocabulary, and gene lists associated with phenotype ontology terms 639 were generated from the Mouse/Human Orthology with Phenotype Annotations (downloaded 640 641 from http://www.informatics.jax.org/downloads/reports/index.html#pheno). For gene enrichment analyses, we found that it was unnecessary to use ensembles of 400 models (20 values for 642 643 each inclusion penalty) because the gene ranks are based on the maximum model weights which do not change significantly when using a denser grid search over the space of inclusion 644 645 penalty. Results shown here were based on ensembles using 4 values of each inclusion penalty (16 models) in each ensemble for each species combination. 646

Null Genetic Model Ensembles. There are a number of different ways to test the genetic models 647 648 produced by machine learning. We built null genetic models by reversing trait designations of a subset of training data such that both the shared evolutionary history and shared basis of the 649

convergent trait between trait-positive species were canceled out (**Fig. 3C**). For an even number 650 2*n* of input species contrast pairs, the largest scrambling of the input phenotype designations is 651 achieved by flipping n pairs. There are ½²*ⁿ*C*ⁿ* possible distinct null configurations. For a small *n*, 652 653 it is possible to generate and combine all null predictions, but a random subset of possible null configurations can be sampled when *n* is large. Another type of null model can be constructed 654 655 by randomly flipping (or not flipping) the residues between the two members of each contrast pair at each site (**Fig. 3D**). This preserves any phylogenetic relationships present in the 656 657 alignment but, when averaging over a large number of such pair-randomized alignments, 658 destroys the correlations that are due to convergence. Both of these null model experiments are 659 expected to produce models whose prediction accuracy on test species not used in model 660 building is comparable to random chance. Protein lists developed by using null genetic models are not expected to be enriched in any functional ontology terms beyond that expected by 661 662 random chance alone.

Data availability 663

664 Grass and mammalian protein sequence alignment data required to reproduce the analyses in 665 this article can be found at: [https://github.com/kumarlabgit/ESL-PSC.](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgithub.com%2Fkumarlabgit%2FESL-PSC&data=05%7C01%7Cjohn.allard%40temple.edu%7C6163c3ad3ea24b3d16a808db24b44b82%7C716e81efb52244738e3110bd02ccf6e5%7C0%7C0%7C638144128998516410%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=bIeCjSGh1aF3jqSn%2FeCeRgY6oaEC8WPCbSz6sJ51w%2BQ%3D&reserved=0)

Code availability 666

667 A GitHub repository containing scripts and software used to perform the ESL-PSC analyses in 668 this study is available at [https://github.com/kumarlabgit/ESL-PSC.](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgithub.com%2Fkumarlabgit%2FESL-PSC&data=05%7C01%7Cjohn.allard%40temple.edu%7C6163c3ad3ea24b3d16a808db24b44b82%7C716e81efb52244738e3110bd02ccf6e5%7C0%7C0%7C638144128998516410%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=bIeCjSGh1aF3jqSn%2FeCeRgY6oaEC8WPCbSz6sJ51w%2BQ%3D&reserved=0)

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Extended data

Supplementary Table 1: Echolocation ensemble model top genes

