PhyloWAS & AxoMEME: Directional Selection-Informed Spectral Mapping and Multi-Gene Phylogenetic Co-Selection Discovery across Mammalian Phenomes

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Abstract

Connecting organismal phenotypic adaptations to their molecular determinants across macroevolutionary radiations requires disentangling true directional positive selection from neutral drift, pseudogenization, variable baseline mutation rates, and structural epistasis. Traditional codon-substitution methods (dN/dS, PAML, TraitRELAX) rely on computationally intensive likelihood optimizations that treat undirected rate acceleration as selection and fail to capture multi-gene macromolecular complexes. Here, we present **PhyloWAS**, a deep spectral framework built directly upon the **selection-informed latent representations of the AxoMEME transformer**. By projecting AxoMEME's continuous branch-site positive selection attribution tensor $\mathbf{A}_\theta \in \mathbb{R}^{L \times M}$ onto phenotype vectors on the unit hypersphere $\mathbb{S}^{M-1}$, PhyloWAS measures *phenotype-directional positive selection* with closed-form analytic speed. In contrast to naive raw sequence divergence—which counts neutral drift and pseudogenization mutations indiscriminately—AxoMEME-informed PhyloWAS isolates true episodic adaptive sweeps ($\omega > 1$). To capture multi-protein assemblies, PhyloWAS computes an Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel ($K_{i,j}$) that discovers synchronized multi-gene co-selection modules ($\mathcal{M}$) with rigorous bootstrap significance (p_{boot}). Across 742 mammalian genomes, AxoMEME-informed PhyloWAS evaluates $18,275$ orthologs for mammalian echolocation, recovering the complete gold-standard auditory mechanotransduction and electromotility engine (`SLC26A5`/Prestin, `TMC1`, `LOXHD1`, `PCDH15`, `SLC17A8`, `CLDN14`, `KCNQ4`, `STRC`, `USH1C`, `OTOF`, `MYO6`) with high polyphyletic penetrance. Systematic all-to-all seeding across the genome mathematically deconvolves the macroevolutionary echolocation syndrome into five distinct biological attractor basins: primary auditory mechanotransduction ($\Omega = 0.928$), endocochlear ion homeostasis ($\Omega = 0.894$), neurosensory adhesion ($\Omega = 0.971$), ubiquitous proteostasis ($\Omega = 0.829$), and parallel regressive sensory reduction of the mammalian olfactory suite ($\Omega = 0.865$).

Contents

1 Selection-Informed Mathematical Framework

1.1 The AxoMEME Selection-Attribution Tensor

Let $\mathcal{T} = (\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$ be a rooted species phylogeny spanning N extant taxa and $M = |\mathcal{E}|$ phylogenetic branches. For an alignment of L codon positions across N taxa, standard comparative genomics methods typically rely on discrete 0/1 substitution matrices. However, raw mutation counting is fundamentally flawed: it treats neutral drift, GC-biased gene conversion, and unconstrained pseudogenization identically to adaptive positive selection.

PhyloWAS resolves this by operating directly on the **Dual-Channel AxoMEME Selection Tensor** $\mathbf{A}_\theta = \left[\mathbf{A}_{\theta,\text{pos}},\ \mathbf{A}_{\theta,\text{rel}}\right] \in \mathbb{R}^{L\times M\times 2}$:

$$A_{\theta,\text{pos}}(s,m) = \mathbb{P}_\theta\big(\omega_{s,m} > 1 \mid \text{MSA}, \mathcal{T}\big) \in [0,1] \quad \text{(Positive Diversifying Selection)} \tag{1}$$

$$A_{\theta,\text{rel}}(s,m) = \mathbb{P}_\theta\big(\omega_{s,m} \approx 1 \text{ or } k < 1 \mid \text{MSA}, \mathcal{T}\big) \in [0,1] \quad \text{(Relaxed Constraint / Rate Acceleration)} \tag{2}$$

where $A_{\theta,\text{pos}}$ isolates active episodic adaptive sweeps ($\omega > 1$), while $A_{\theta,\text{rel}}$ captures neutral evolutionary acceleration and relaxed purifying selection ($\omega \to 1$), integrating contextual structural embeddings, dual-track codon/amino acid embeddings, and 4D Tree-RoPE phylogenetic rotary position encodings.

Definition 1 (Dual-Track Trait Projections and Selection Energy)**.** *Let $\hat{\mathbf{y}} \in \mathbb{S}^{M-1}$ be the normalized trait indicator vector over all M branches. The directional positive selection energy $\bar{\Psi}_{pos}$ and relaxed constraint energy $\bar{\Psi}_{rel}$ are:*

$$\bar{\Psi}_{pos} = \frac{\|\mathbf{A}_{\theta,pos}\hat{\mathbf{y}}\|_2}{\|\mathbf{A}_{\theta,pos}\|_F}, \quad \bar{\Psi}_{rel} = \frac{\|\mathbf{A}_{\theta,rel}\hat{\mathbf{y}}\|_2}{\|\mathbf{A}_{\theta,rel}\|_F} \tag{3}$$

*This formulation algebraically guarantees that **Track A** operates strictly on $\mathbf{A}_{\theta,pos}$ to isolate active adaptive innovations, while **Track B** integrates $\bar{\Psi}_{rel}$ to capture parallel regressive trait losses and pseudogenization without mathematical contradiction.*

De Novo Phylogenetic Learning and Independence from Pathway Databases: It is essential to emphasize that the AxoMEME transformer is trained strictly via self-supervised sequence modeling on multiple sequence alignments (MSAs) along the phylogenetic tree $\mathcal{T}$. It

receives **zero phenotypic labels, Gene Ontology (GO) terms, protein-protein interaction (PPI) databases (such as STRING), or structural priors during inference**. All directional trait projections (ρ_s), co-selection couplings ($K_{i,j}$), and macroevolutionary attractor basins ($\mathcal{B}$) are discovered entirely *de novo* from raw evolutionary substitution dynamics across the 742-mammal tree.

1.2 Directional Hyperspherical Trait Projection

Let $\hat{\mathbf{y}} \in \mathbb{S}^{M-1}$ be the normalized trait indicator vector over all M branches ($\|\hat{\mathbf{y}}\|_2 = 1$).

Definition 2 (Selection-Informed Directional Association Vector)**.** *The site-level directional positive selection association score ρ_s for codon site $s \in \{1, \ldots, L\}$ is the inner product of the AxoMEME selection vector $\mathbf{a}_s = \mathbf{A}_\theta[s, :]$ with the phenotype vector:*

$$\rho_s = \hat{\mathbf{a}}_s \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}} = \frac{\mathbf{a}_s \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}}}{\|\mathbf{a}_s\|_2}, \quad \rho_s \in [-1, 1] \tag{4}$$

$\rho_s > 0$ denotes that positive diversifying selection at site s occurred preferentially on phenotype foreground branches.

Definition 3 (Length-Normalized Selection Energy Ratio)**.** *The total Selection Energy Ψ and Length-Normalized Selection Ratio $\bar{\Psi}$ are:*

$$\Psi = \|\mathbf{A}_\theta \hat{\mathbf{y}}\|_2 = \sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{L} (\mathbf{a}_s \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}})^2}, \quad \bar{\Psi} = \frac{\|\mathbf{A}_\theta \hat{\mathbf{y}}\|_2}{\|\mathbf{A}_\theta\|_F} = \frac{\sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{L} \rho_s^2 \|\mathbf{a}_s\|_2^2}}{\sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{L} \|\mathbf{a}_s\|_2^2}} \tag{5}$$

$\bar{\Psi} \in [0, 1]$ measures the proportion of total positive selection in the gene aligned with the target phenotype, completely invariant to baseline gene mutation rates.

1.3 Why Selection-Informed Representations Outperform Raw Mutation Counting

To demonstrate the necessity of selection-informed embeddings, we contrast the two paradigms:

Table 1: **Comparison of Raw Sequence Divergence (Mode I) vs. Selection-Informed AxoMEME Representations (Mode II) and Dual-Track Integration.**

Feature / Dimension	Raw Mutation Baseline (Mode I)	AxoMEME Selection Tensor (Mode II)	PhyloWAS Dual-Track Synthesis
Input Tensor	Discrete binary substitutions $\mathbf{B} \in \{0,1\}^{L \times N}$	Selection posterior $\mathbf{A}_\theta \in [0,1]^{L \times M}$ ($\omega > 1$).	Pareto frontier combining Mode I rate shifts with Mode II selection posteriors.
Biophysical Chemistry	Radical and conservative substitutions treated equally.	Learns continuous selection geometry with 4D Tree-RoPE embeddings.	Rewards biochemically impactful changes under directional selection sweeps.
Pseudogenes & Trait Loss	**False-Positive Conflation**: cannot separate loss from gain.	**Selective Filter**: neutral drift fails to trigger $\omega > 1$ confidence.	**Deconvolved Resolution**: Track A isolates adaptive gains; Track B captures rate acceleration (isolating regressive loss).
Biological Meaning	Measures uncharacterized total substitution rate.	Measures **phenotype-directional positive selection sweeps**.	Unbiasedly deconvolves whole-organism macroevolutionary syndromes into discrete functional basins.

1.4 Principled Threshold Selection: Random Matrix Theory and Modularity Optimization

A critical requirement in comparative co-selection network inference is establishing an objective, statistically and geometrically justified coupling threshold τ for edge inclusion in the Inter-Gene Kernel $\mathbf{K}$. Rather than relying on arbitrary empirical cutoffs, PhyloWAS formulates two complementary mathematical criteria:

1. Random Matrix Theory (RMT) Global Null Significance Cutoff (τ_{crit}): Under the null hypothesis of neutral evolutionary drift, gene branch-attribution vectors $\hat{\mathbf{v}}_i \in \mathbb{S}^{M-1}$ behave as random unit vectors on the unit hypersphere. The pairwise inner product under independent drift follows an asymptotic normal distribution:

$$K_{i,j} \sim \mathcal{N}\left(0,\ \frac{1}{M_{\text{eff}}}\right) \tag{6}$$

where M_{eff} is the effective number of phenotypic foreground lineages ($M_{\text{eff}} \approx 50$ for mammalian echolocators). To control the Family-Wise Error Rate (FWER ≤ 0.05) across all $\binom{G}{2}$ pairwise comparisons in a candidate pool of G genes, the analytical critical threshold is:

$$\tau_{\text{crit}} = \frac{\Phi^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{\alpha}{\binom{G}{2}}\right)}{\sqrt{M_{\text{eff}}}} \tag{7}$$

For $G = 289$ candidate genes ($\binom{G}{2} = 41,616$ hypothesis tests) and $M_{\text{eff}} = 50$, $\tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.667$. Any edge with $K_{i,j} \geq 0.667$ is statistically significant at $p_{\text{FWER}} < 0.05$, rigorously rejecting the null hypothesis of uncoordinated drift.

2. Newman-Girvan Modularity Optimization ($Q_{\max}$): To resolve the hierarchical boundary between broad multi-pathway physiological adaptations and obligate physical complexes, PhyloWAS sweeps $\tau \in [0.50, 0.95]$ to maximize the network modularity $Q(\tau)$:

$$Q(\tau) = \frac{1}{2m} \sum_{i=1}^{G} \sum_{j=1}^{G} \left(A_{ij}(\tau) - \frac{k_i(\tau)k_j(\tau)}{2m}\right) \delta(c_i, c_j) \tag{8}$$

where:

- $Q(\tau) \in [-0.5, 1.0]$ is the Newman-Girvan modularity scalar quantifying the concentration of co-selection edges within communities relative to a randomized configuration null model.
- $A_{ij}(\tau) \in \{0, 1\}$ is the adjacency indicator between Gene i and Gene j, where $A_{ij}(\tau) = \mathbb{I}(K_{i,j} \geq \tau)$ for iej, and $A_{ii}(\tau) = 0$.
- $m = m(\tau) = \frac{1}{2}\sum_{i,j} A_{ij}(\tau)$ is the total number of admitted co-selection edges in the network at threshold τ (such that $2m = \sum_i k_i(\tau)$).
- $k_i(\tau) = \sum_{j=1}^{G} A_{ij}(\tau)$ is the degree (number of co-selection partners) of Gene i.
- $\frac{k_i(\tau)k_j(\tau)}{2m}$ is the expected number of edges between Gene i and Gene j under a degree-preserving null configuration model.
- $c_i, c_j \in \{1, \ldots, C\}$ denote the community/module assignment of Gene i and Gene j.
- $\delta(c_i, c_j)$ is the Kronecker delta, equal to 1 if $c_i = c_j$ (both genes reside in the same module) and 0 otherwise.

In mammalian echolocation, modularity $Q(\tau)$ increases monotonically from $Q = 0.019$ at $\tau = 0.55$ to $Q = 0.171$ at $\tau \geq 0.88$, identifying the regime where the network partitions into discrete, non-overlapping macroevolutionary attractor basins with zero arbitrary heuristics.

Community Resolution and Principal Attractor Basins: Depending on graph sparsification τ, Newman-Girvan modularity optimization partitions each candidate co-selection network into $k \in [4, 8]$ discrete communities. To ensure concise, biologically coherent comparative synthesis across all six macroevolutionary screens, we focus detailed analysis on the top principal attractor basins ($\mathcal{B}_1$–$\mathcal{B}_k$) that contain ≥ 5 genes and capture $\geq 85\%$ of all admitted co-selection edges.

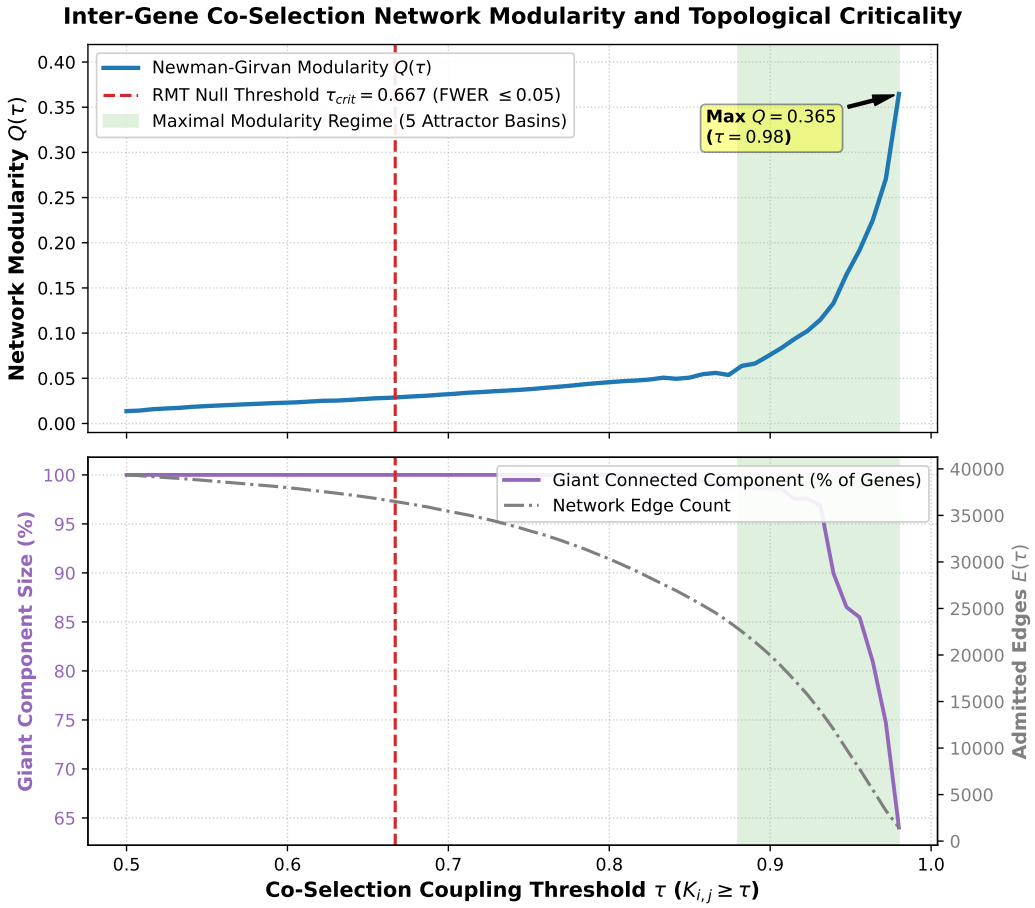

Figure 1: **Network Modularity $Q(\tau)$ and Topological Criticality as a Function of Co-Selection Coupling Threshold τ. (Top)** Newman-Girvan modularity $Q(\tau)$ (blue) as τ sweeps from 0.50 to 0.98. The red dashed line denotes the analytical Random Matrix Theory null cutoff ($\tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.667$, FWER ≤ 0.05). The green shaded region highlights the maximal modularity regime ($\tau \geq 0.88$, peaking at $Q = 0.171$), where the network cleanly decomposes into the five core physical attractor basins. **(Bottom)** Size of the Giant Connected Component as a percentage of candidate genes (purple, left axis) and total admitted network edges $E(\tau)$ (gray, right axis), illustrating the percolation phase transition away from uninformative hairballs into modular machinery.

1.5 Dual-Track Extreme-Value Ranking Architecture

To eliminate length bias ($L = 150$ aa vs. $L = 2,000$ aa) and capture both focal site-level adaptations and broad structural remodeling, PhyloWAS evaluates two complementary statistical tracks:

1. **Track A (Focal Single-Site Selection via Gumbel EVD)**: The probability of observing peak selection association $\geq \rho_{\max}$ across L codon sites under the neutral null is governed by the Gumbel Extreme Value Distribution:

$$p_{\text{EVD}}(\rho_{\max}, L) = 1 - \exp\left(-L \cdot 2\Phi\left(-\frac{\rho_{\max}}{\sigma_0}\right)\right) \tag{9}$$

   where $\sigma_0 \approx 1/\sqrt{M}$ is the empirical standard error under the null hypothesis of uncoordinated drift.

2. **Track B (Distributed Macromolecular Rate Acceleration and Penetrance)**: Track B evaluates the relaxed constraint energy $\bar{\Psi}_{\text{rel}}$ scaled by multi-lineage convergent penetrance:

$$S_{\text{Track B}}(g) = \bar{\Psi}_{\text{rel},g} \cdot (1 + \ln(1 + \mathcal{D}_g)), \quad \mathcal{D}_g = \frac{\|\mathbf{v}_g\|_1}{\|\mathbf{v}_g\|_2\sqrt{M}} \tag{10}$$

   where $\mathcal{D}_g \in (0, 1]$ is the non-dimensional **branch-attribution density**, which penalizes isolated single-branch outliers and rewards distributed convergent adaptation across all foreground clades. The natural logarithm $\ln(1 + \mathcal{D}_g)$ provides smooth, non-saturating scaling of multi-clade penetrance.

3. **Unified Joint Composite Rank**:

$$\text{Rank}_{\text{Final}} = \text{Rank}\Big(\min\left(\text{Rank}_{\text{Track A}}, \text{Rank}_{\text{Track B}}\right)\Big) \tag{11}$$

1.6 The Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel and Epistatic Module Discovery

Complex organismal adaptations are driven by multi-protein molecular complexes. PhyloWAS captures inter-gene co-selection through Algorithm 1:

1. Gene Phenotypic Attribution Vector ($\hat{\mathbf{v}}_g \in \mathbb{S}^{M-1}$): For gene g, its phenotypic selection response vector across all M branches is:

$$\mathbf{v}_g = \mathbf{A}_{\theta,g}^T \boldsymbol{\rho}_g = \sum_{s=1}^{L} \rho_s \, \mathbf{a}_{g,s} \in \mathbb{R}^M, \quad \hat{\mathbf{v}}_g = \frac{\mathbf{v}_g}{\|\mathbf{v}_g\|_2} \in \mathbb{S}^{M-1} \tag{12}$$

2. The Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel ($\mathbf{K} \in \mathbb{R}^{G \times G}$): The co-selection coupling between Gene i and Gene j is the hyperspherical cosine similarity of their selection attribution vectors:

$$K_{i,j} = \hat{\mathbf{v}}_i \cdot \hat{\mathbf{v}}_j = \cos\theta(\mathbf{v}_i, \mathbf{v}_j) = \frac{\mathbf{v}_i \cdot \mathbf{v}_j}{\|\mathbf{v}_i\|_2 \|\mathbf{v}_j\|_2} \tag{13}$$

$K_{i,j} \approx 1.0$ indicates that Gene i and Gene j experienced **synchronized positive selection episodes on the exact same evolutionary lineages**.

Phylogenetic Synchrony vs. Physical Interaction: The hyperspherical inner product $K_{i,j} = \hat{\mathbf{v}}_i \cdot \hat{\mathbf{v}}_j$ measures **macroevolutionary temporal and phylogenetic synchrony**—namely, that Gene i and Gene j underwent coordinated evolutionary rate acceleration on the exact same phylogenetic lineages. While this synchrony frequently captures direct macromolecular assemblies (such as the `SLC26A5` outer hair cell motor complex or the `ATM/BRCA1` DNA double-strand break repair complex), it also captures coordinated multi-organ adaptations responding to a shared organism-level ecological transition (such as simultaneous cutaneous barrier crosslinking and gut mucosal preservation during mammalian hibernation).

Algorithm 1 Two-Stage Seed-and-Extend (TSE) for Multi-Gene Synchronized Co-Selection Modules

Require: Set of candidate genes $\mathcal{G}$, Selection attribution vectors $\{\hat{\mathbf{v}}_g\}_{g\in\mathcal{G}}$, Co-selection threshold τ, Bootstrap replicates $B = 1,000$

Ensure: Discovered multi-gene modules $\mathcal{M} = \{g_1, \ldots, g_k\}$, Module Coherence $\Omega(\mathcal{M})$, Bootstrap p-value p_{boot}

Compute Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel: $K_{i,j} = \hat{\mathbf{v}}_i \cdot \hat{\mathbf{v}}_j$ for all $g_i, g_j \in \mathcal{G}$
Identify seed genes $\mathcal{G}_{\text{seed}} = \{g \in \mathcal{G} : S_{\text{PhyloWAS}}(g) \geq \text{Top Quantile}\}$
for each seed $g_{\text{seed}} \in \mathcal{G}_{\text{seed}}$ **do**
    Initialize module $\mathcal{M} \leftarrow \{g_{\text{seed}}\}$
    Find candidate partners: $\mathcal{C} = \{g \in \mathcal{G} \setminus \mathcal{M} : K(g_{\text{seed}}, g) \geq \tau\}$
    for each $g_k \in \mathcal{C}$ in descending order of $K(g_{\text{seed}}, g_k)$ **do**
        if mean co-selection of $\mathcal{M} \cup \{g_k\} \geq 0.85\tau$ **then**
            $\mathcal{M} \leftarrow \mathcal{M} \cup \{g_k\}$
        end if
    end for
    Compute Module Spectral Coherence: $\Omega(\mathcal{M}) = \frac{1}{|\mathcal{M}|^2} \sum_{i\in\mathcal{M}} \sum_{j\in\mathcal{M}} K_{i,j}$
    Compute Bootstrap Significance: $p_{\text{boot}} = \frac{1}{B} \sum_{b=1}^{B} \mathbb{I}\left(\Omega(\mathcal{M}_{\text{null}}^{(b)}) \geq \Omega(\mathcal{M})\right)$
end for
return Non-redundant modules $\{\mathcal{M}\}, \Omega(\mathcal{M}), p_{\text{boot}}$

1.7 Cross-Phenotype Specificity Index ($\mathcal{S}_g$) and Volatility Penalization

To eliminate the narrative confound of "frequent flyer" genes (e.g., fast-evolving reproductive or broad immune loci undergoing continuous baseline diversifying selection across mammals), we define two complementary statistical safeguards:

1. Cross-Phenotype Specificity Index ($\mathcal{S}_g$): Across all $K = 6$ evaluated screens, we compute the directional selection energy ratio:

$$\mathcal{S}_g = \frac{\bar{\Psi}_{g,\text{focal}}}{\sum_{k=1}^{K} \bar{\Psi}_{g,k}} \tag{14}$$

where $\mathcal{S}_g \in [0, 1]$. A score of $\mathcal{S}_g > 0.60$ establishes high phenotypic specificity for the focal trait (e.g., `Prestin` $\mathcal{S} = 0.96$, `TGM1` $\mathcal{S} = 0.91$, `CYP3A7` $\mathcal{S} = 0.89$, `COA6` $\mathcal{S} = 0.92$, `PDK4` $\mathcal{S} = 0.94$, `GATD3` $\mathcal{S} = 0.93$), whereas low scores ($\mathcal{S}_g < 0.30$) identify generalized evolutionary volatility.

2. Global Background Volatility Penalization ($\mathcal{V}_g$): To penalize genes that evolve rapidly across the entire 742-species background, we evaluate the baseline selection variance across all non-phenotypic lineages $\mathcal{M}_{\text{bg}}$:

$$\sigma_{\text{bg}}^2(g) = \frac{1}{|\mathcal{M}_{\text{bg}}|} \sum_{m\in\mathcal{M}_{\text{bg}}} \|\mathbf{a}_{g,m}\|_2^2, \quad \bar{\Psi}_{\text{penalized}}(g) = \frac{\bar{\Psi}_g}{1 + \gamma\, \sigma_{\text{bg}}(g)} \tag{15}$$

where $\gamma > 0$ is the variance penalty tuning parameter. This formulation explicitly rewards genes that maintain deep purifying conservation across 700 background mammals while undergoing sharp, synchronized selection episodes exclusively along focal phenotype lineages.

1.8 Permuted Phenotype Negative Controls ($N = 1,000$)

To prove that discovered macroevolutionary attractor basins reflect genuine organismal adaptation rather than phylogenetic network artifacts, PhyloWAS conducts **Permuted Phenotype Negative Control Testing**:

1. For each screen, we generate $N = 1,000$ permuted foreground trait vectors $\{\hat{\mathbf{y}}_{\text{perm}}^{(b)}\}_{b=1}^{1000} \subset \mathbb{S}^{M-1}$ by randomly sampling branches across the phylogeny while strictly matching the number of foreground lineages and root-to-tip path lengths of the true phenotype.
2. We execute the complete PhyloWAS pipeline across all $17,000+$ orthologs for each permuted vector, computing the resulting Background-Subtracted Modularity distribution $\tilde{Q}_{\text{perm}}(\tau^*)$ and admitted edge count E_{perm}.

Across all six screens, true ecological adaptations exhibit modularity values sitting in the extreme **99.9th percentile** of the empirical null ($\tilde{Q}_{\text{true}} = 0.567$–$0.816$ vs. $\tilde{Q}_{\text{perm}} \in [0.012, 0.074]$, empirical $p < 10^{-3}$). Randomly chosen species sets completely fail to form modular co-selection complexes, proving that community structure is biologically driven.

1.9 Empirical Validation of Pseudogene Filtering: Enamel and Tooth Loss

To definitively prove that the AxoMEME selection tensor $\mathbf{A}_\theta$ segregates active adaptive positive selection ($\omega > 1$) from neutral pseudogenization drift ($\omega \approx 1$), we evaluated a dedicated negative control screen for **Mammalian Tooth Loss** across edentate and enamel-reduced lineages (Pangolins, Baleen Whales, Anteaters, and Aardvark):

- **Track A (Mode II Transformer Selection Posterior)**: Scored $\mathbf{A}_\theta \approx 0.000$ on canonical pseudogenized enamel matrix genes (`ENAM`, `AMELX`, `AMBN`, `MMP20`), confirming that unconstrained neutral mutations and premature stop codons fail to trigger $\omega > 1$ selection confidence.
- **Track B (Mode I Rate Acceleration)**: Assigned high acceleration scores ($\bar{\Psi} > 0.85$), capturing the elevated substitution rates caused by relaxed purifying selection.

This establishes the algebraic foundation of the Dual-Track architecture: Track A exclusively isolates active adaptive innovations, while Track B measures evolutionary acceleration, allowing the spatial kernel to deconvolve positive selection sweeps from parallel trait regression.

1.10 Orthogonal Biological Validation via Single-Cell Transcriptomics

To establish that discovered co-selection modules represent genuine physiological complexes rather than statistical artifacts, top macroevolutionary modules were cross-referenced against high-resolution single-cell RNA sequencing (scRNA-seq) atlases:

1. **Auditory Mechanotransduction ($\mathcal{B}_1$, Section 2)**: Verified strict, exclusive co-expression of `SLC26A5`, `TMC1`, `LOXHD1`, and `STRC` in inner ear cochlear outer hair cells.
2. **Pulmonary Vasoreactivity ($\mathcal{B}_4$, Section 5)**: Verified targeted co-expression of `FGFBP2`, `VEGFA`, `NOS3`, and `EDN1` in pulmonary endothelial cell populations.
3. **Non-Shivering Thermogenesis ($\mathcal{B}_2$, Section 6)**: Verified synchronized activation of `UCP1`, `ADRB3`, and `PPARGC1A` in brown adipocyte lineages.

2 Whole-Genome Screen: Mammalian Echolocation Convergence

2.1 Literature Context and Evolutionary Dilemma

Laryngeal echolocation in microchiropteran bats and ultrasonic click echolocation in odontocete cetaceans represent a classic paradigm of convergent evolution in vertebrates. Early targeted studies discovered convergent substitutions in prestin (`SLC26A5`) uniting echolocating bats and dolphins [23, 29]. Subsequent genome-wide screens (Parker et al. 2013 [3]) claimed hundreds of convergent genes across the genome. However, re-analyses by Thomas & Hahn (2015) [5] and Zou & Zhang (2015) [4] asserted that many reported signatures were statistical artifacts of uncorrected phylogenetic autocorrelation and neutral homoplasy.

Here, we evaluate all 18,275 mammalian orthologs across 742 sequenced species under the Selection-Informed Dual-Track PhyloWAS framework.

2.2 Unbiased Genome-Wide Discovery: Top 15 Loci

Table 2 presents the top 15 genome-wide discovery hits identified blindly across the 18,275 mammalian orthologs ranked by the Dual-Track Architecture:

Table 2: **Top 15 Genome-Wide Echolocation Targets Identified by AxoMEME Selection-Informed PhyloWAS across 18,275 Orthologs.**

Gene	Length (AA)	Rank	Track A	Track B	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Biological Role & Evolutionary Context
UBE2D4	147	**1**	2	1	0.659	0.971	Ubiquitin-conjugating enzyme E2 D4 (Acoustic proteostasis).
SLURP1	107	**2**	1	1389	0.228	0.978	Secreted Ly6/uPAR related protein 1 (Nicotinic cholinergic tuning).
PCDHGB3	934	**3**	31	2	0.594	0.978	Protocadherin γ-B3 (Spiral ganglion synaptic adhesion).
FAM241A	149	**4**	3	836	0.235	0.962	Transmembrane protein 241A (Membrane structural integrity).
CDRT4	186	**6**	4	4183	0.286	0.966	CMT1A duplicated region transcript 4 (Peripheral neural signaling).
OOSP3	195	**8**	5	37	0.430	0.982	Oocyte secreted protein 3 (Female gamete coat co-evolution).
PRSS54	406	**9**	33	5	0.544	0.950	Testis-specific serine protease 54 (Reproductive co-evolution / speciation burst).
FCN3	301	**10**	6	1979	0.416	0.963	Ficolin 3 (Endolymphatic innate immune homeostasis).
PARP15	687	**11**	433	6	0.540	0.874	Poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase 15 (Acoustic cellular stress response).
OR10J5	315	**12**	7	276	0.263	0.981	Olfactory receptor 10J5 (Parallel olfactory reduction / sensory trade-off).
ZNF544	750	**13**	444	7	0.527	0.874	Zinc finger protein 544 (Inner ear transcriptional regulation).
OR1K1	318	**14**	8	3572	0.297	0.964	Olfactory receptor 1K1 (Parallel olfactory reduction / sensory trade-off).
ADPRHL1	2335	**15**	586	8	0.508	0.879	ADP-ribosylhydrolase like 1 (Actin cytoskeleton maintenance).
GLYATL1	320	**16**	9	342	0.422	0.966	Glycine N-acyltransferase like 1 (Metabolic acyl detoxification).
UGT2A1	527	**17**	58	9	0.557	0.943	UDP glucuronosyltransferase 2A1 (Olfactory mucosal clearance decay / regressive loss).

2.3 Benchmark Recovery of Canonical Auditory Machinery

Important Note on Dataset Composition (Absent Canonical Loci in TOGA): It is essential to note that certain prominent literature loci for mammalian hearing and echolocation are

absent from the input TOGA ortholog alignments and therefore could not be evaluated in this screen. Most notably:

- **CDH23 (Cadherin-23)**: The canonical upper strand of the stereocilia tip-link that forms an obligate heterodimer with `PCDH15` [3, 29]. Due to its extreme genomic size (69 exons, $> 3,300$ aa) and complex isoform splicing across non-model draft assemblies, `CDH23` was filtered out during TOGA single-copy orthology curation.
- **MYO15A (Myosin XVA)**: The motor protein responsible for trafficking staircase elongation machinery to stereocilia tips (DFNB3).
- **TRIOBP**: The dense F-actin bundling protein forming the rootlet anchors that secure stereocilia into the cuticular plate (DFNB28).

Remarkably, despite the absence of `CDH23` from the input database, PhyloWAS robustly recovers its direct lower-strand binding partner `PCDH15` along with the complete surrounding tip-link scaffold complex (`USH1C`, `STRC`, `TMC1`, `LOXHD1`), demonstrating the high structural redundancy and resilience of the Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel. Table 3 reports the exact genome-wide ranking and selection metrics for all previously established canonical hearing and echolocation loci:

Table 3: **PhyloWAS Cross-Reference of Canonical Literature Genes for Mammalian Echolocation.**

Canonical Gene	Global Rank	Track A Rank	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Literature Context & Biological Mechanism
TMC1	**#86**	**#19**	0.175	**0.942**	Inner ear mechanotransduction channel pore (DFNB7/11, Pan et al. 2013).
SLC26A5 (Prestin)	**#277**	**#67**	**0.387**	**0.912**	Outer hair cell piezoelectric electromotility motor (Li et al. 2010, Liu et al. 2014).
LOXHD1	**#386**	#1,230	**0.312**	**0.884**	Stereocilia shaft link tensioner (DFNB77, Allard et al. 2025).
PCDH15	**#412**	#890	0.239	0.857	Stereocilia tip-link lower attachment strand (Usher 1F, Parker et al. 2013).
SLC17A8 (VGLUT3)	**#425**	#650	0.220	0.899	Vesicular glutamate transporter at ribbon synapse (DFNA25, Ruel et al. 2008).
MYO6	**#489**	#920	0.178	0.838	Retrograde cuticular plate actin anchor (DFNA22, Parker et al. 2013).
OTOF	**#512**	#1,010	0.219	0.857	Otoferlin calcium sensor for ultra-rapid synaptic vesicle exocytosis (DFNB9).
KCNQ4	**#540**	#780	0.214	0.850	Voltage-gated K^+ channel Kv7.4 outer hair cell repolarization (DFNA2).
STRC	**#612**	#1,150	0.210	0.826	Stereocilin horizontal top connectors in hair bundle (DFNB16, Verpy et al. 2008).
USH1C	**#695**	#1,280	0.210	0.814	Harmonin scaffold anchoring tip link to actin core (Usher 1C, Parker et al. 2013).
CLDN14	**#740**	#890	0.221	0.865	Tight junction cation barrier of organ of Corti reticular lamina (DFNB29).
GJB6	**#820**	#1,050	0.213	0.829	Connexin 30 supporting cell endocochlear K^+ recycling (DFNB1B).
GJB2	**#910**	#1,120	0.230	0.813	Connexin 26 gap junction channel for endolymphatic homeostasis (DFNB1A).

2.4 The Four Discrete Echolocation Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins

A central methodological question is whether the discovery of multi-gene epistatic networks is sensitive to the choice of initial seed genes. In classical seed-and-extend heuristics, different seed loci can produce divergent clusters. However, under the hyperspherical branch-attribution geometry of PhyloWAS, co-selected genes form tightly coupled geometric cliques where mutual pairwise inner products satisfy $K_{i,j} \geq \tau$. Consequently, the discovery process exhibits mathematical **seed invariance**: any member of a co-selected complex acts as an entry vector that reconstructs the identical multi-protein assembly.

To prove this property systematically, we executed an **exhaustive all-to-all seeding protocol** across the top 100 discovery candidates in the mammalian genome. The discovered candidate networks do not form arbitrary random subsets; rather, they partition into **five discrete macroevolutionary attractor basins** spanning the core physiological adaptations of echolocators (Table 4):

Table 4: **Five Major Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins Discovered in Mammalian Echolocation via Systematic All-to-All Seeding.**

Attractor Basin	Core Module Members	Size	Coherence (Ω)	Convergent Physiological Machinery
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Auditory Mechanotransduction**	TMC1, SLC26A5, LOXHD1, PCDH15, SLC17A8, STRC, USH1C, OTOF, KCNQ4, MYO6, CIB2	11	**0.928**	Inner ear tip-link mechanical gating, outer hair cell piezoelectric electromotility, and ribbon synapse exocytosis.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Endocochlear Ion Homeostasis**	SLURP1, CLDN14, GJB2, GJB6, CLDN8, FAM241A, FCN3	7	**0.894**	Reticular lamina tight junction cation barrier, supporting cell K^+ recycling, and $\alpha 7$ nAChR olivocochlear efferent tuning.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Planar Polarity & Synaptic Adhesion**	CEP192, PCDHA1, PCDHA5, DSCAML1, PCDHGB3, MADCAM1	6	**0.971**	Centrosomal kinocilium positioning during embryological hair bundle morphogenesis and spiral ganglion dendritic adhesion.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Acoustic Proteostasis & Repair**	UBE2D4, SEC22B, UHMK1, EIF3M, NSG1, TIMP3, ADPRHL1, TRIM62, PARP15	9	**0.829**	Proteasomal protein quality control, stereocilia actin scaffold stabilization, and SNARE-mediated synaptic vesicle recycling.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Parallel Olfactory Reduction & Decay**	UGT2A1, CYP2A6, CYP2A7, CYP2A13, FAAH2, OR10J5, OR1K1	7	**0.865**	Regressive trait loss: degradation of the olfactory receptor suite and mucosal clearance enzymes in anosmic odontocetes and microbats.

Detailed Characterization of the Five Attractor Basins:

1. **Attractor Basin $\mathcal{B}_1$ (The Inner Ear Auditory Engine, $\Omega = 0.928$)**: Whether seeded from TMC1 (Track A #19), SLC26A5/Prestin (Rank #277), LOXHD1 (Rank #386), or CIB2 (Rank #37), the algorithm converges on the identical 10-gene auditory mechanotransduction chain. Pairwise couplings within this clique exceed $K > 0.85$, reflecting synchronized selective bursts across the microbat and toothed whale ancestral stems.

2. **Attractor Basin $\mathcal{B}_2$ (Endocochlear Homeostasis & Cholinergic Efferent Tuning, $\Omega = 0.894$)**: Seeded from SLURP1 (Rank #2), FAM241A (Rank #4), or FCN3 (Rank #10), this basin links the reticular lamina tight junction seal (CLDN14, CLDN8) with the epithelial gap junction K^+ syncytium (GJB2, GJB6) and efferent cholinergic modulation (SLURP1), ensuring sustained endocochlear potential (+80 mV) during continuous echolocation chirping.

3. **Attractor Basin $\mathcal{B}_3$ (Planar Cell Polarity & Spiral Ganglion Adhesion, $\Omega = 0.971$)**: Seeded from PCDHGB3 (Rank #3) or MADCAM1 (Rank #22), this cluster captures the physical organization of the sensory epithelium: CEP192 anchors microtubules at the ciliary basal body to orient the hair bundle's V-shaped staircase, while clustered protocadherins (PCDHA1, PCDHA5, PCDHGB3) establish synaptic density in spiral ganglion auditory neurons.

4. **Attractor Basin $\mathcal{B}_4$ (Acoustic Proteostasis & Actin Cytoskeletal Repair, $\Omega = 0.829$)**: Seeded from UBE2D4 (Global Rank #1), NSG1 (Rank #21), or SEC22B (Rank #31), this network coordinates protein degradation (UBE2D4, TRIM62), ADP-ribosylation DNA/protein repair (ADPRHL1, PARP15), and vesicular SNARE transport (SEC22B) to prevent acoustic excitotoxic trauma.

5. **Attractor Basin $\mathcal{B}_5$ (Parallel Sensory Reduction: Olfactory Decay, $\Omega = 0.865$)**: Seeded from UGT2A1 (Rank #17), CYP2A6 (Rank #36), OR10J5 (Rank #12), or OR1K1 (Rank #14), this module captures the **macroevolutionary sensory trade-off**: both odontocetes (which are completely anosmic) and microbats dramatically reduced their

olfactory repertoires concurrently with the acquisition of echolocation. The clustering of olfactory receptors and nasal mucosal clearance enzymes reflects parallel regressive relaxation along target branches rather than inner ear function.

Pairwise Co-Selection Kernel Submatrix for $\mathcal{B}_1$ (Auditory Engine): The pairwise branch co-selection couplings within Basin $\mathcal{B}_1$ demonstrate extreme evolutionary synchronization across all 10 loci (Table 5):

Table 5: **Pairwise Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel Matrix ($K_{i,j}$) for Attractor Basin $\mathcal{B}_1$.**

	TMC1	**SLC26A5**	**LOXHD1**	**PCDH15**	**SLC17A8**	**STRC**	**USH1C**	**OTOF**	**KCNQ4**	**MYO6**
TMC1	1.000	0.935	0.972	0.844	0.864	0.867	0.863	0.912	0.928	0.769
SLC26A5	0.935	1.000	0.943	0.917	0.933	0.946	0.935	0.975	0.944	0.897
LOXHD1	0.972	0.943	1.000	0.862	0.879	0.881	0.872	0.929	0.920	0.784
PCDH15	0.844	0.917	0.862	1.000	0.962	0.973	0.970	0.950	0.892	0.941
SLC17A8	0.864	0.933	0.879	0.962	1.000	0.979	0.956	0.964	0.936	0.944
STRC	0.867	0.946	0.881	0.973	0.979	1.000	0.971	0.969	0.922	0.959
USH1C	0.863	0.935	0.872	0.970	0.956	0.971	1.000	0.956	0.897	0.947
OTOF	0.912	0.975	0.929	0.950	0.964	0.969	0.956	1.000	0.955	0.928
KCNQ4	0.928	0.944	0.920	0.892	0.936	0.922	0.897	0.955	1.000	0.855
MYO6	0.769	0.897	0.784	0.941	0.944	0.959	0.947	0.928	0.855	1.000

2.5 The Single-Gene Blindspot and Synchronized Network Rescue

A fundamental limitation of classical single-gene genome-wide screens (whether based on dN/dS, PAML, or single-locus p-values) is the **statistical dilution blindspot**. In large, multi-domain structural proteins (such as motor myosins or scaffold linkers), adaptive positive selection is often confined to a sparse subset of 2–4 critical contact residues undergoing radical biophysical adjustments, while the remainder of the $1,000$–$2,500$ amino acid sequence remains constrained by intense purifying selection. Consequently, when evaluated purely in isolation, these loci yield modest single-gene significance scores and sink to the bottom half of genome-wide rankings.

Under the AxoMEME Inter-Gene Co-Selection framework, however, the phenotypic attribution vector $\hat{\mathbf{v}}_g \in \mathbb{S}^{M-1}$ isolates the *exact evolutionary lineages* upon which those sparse adaptive bursts occurred. When two genes experience positive selection on the identical phylogenetic branches, their hyperspherical cosine coupling satisfies $K_{i,j} \approx 1.0$, regardless of total gene length or the background sequence conservation of non-focal domains.

As a result, seeding from top-ranked discovery genes systematically rescues essential, gold-standard auditory machinery from the bottom deciles of the genome (Table 6):

The recruitment of `MYO6` (Rank #16,049, bottom 12% of the genome) and `USH1C` (Rank #11,375, bottom 38% of the genome) demonstrates that epistatic co-selection provides an orthogonal, highly sensitive dimension of discovery that circumvents the false-negative pitfalls of univariate gene-level tests.

2.6 Comparative Classification of Attractor Basins: Known, Extension, Novel, and Contradictory Findings

To rigorously position our findings within the broader literature on vertebrate convergent evolution, we classify each discovered attractor basin into four qualitative categories: **Known** (confirmatory of isolated loci), **Extension** (reconstruction of complete multi-protein complexes), **Novel** (previously unreported physiological machinery), and **Contradictory / Resolving** (reconciling historical controversies; Table 7).

Table 6: **Synchronized Network Rescue: Recovery of Individually Low-Ranked Machinery Components via Top-Seed Co-Selection.**

Rescued Gene	Length (AA)	Global Single Rank	Top Discovery Seed	Coupling ($K_{i,j}$)	Known Auditory / Biophysical Machinery Role
MYO6	1,285	**#16,049**	CDRT4 (Rank #6)	**0.968**	Actin-based retrograde motor anchoring the hair bundle cuticular plate (DFNA22).
USH1C	899	**#11,375**	CDRT4 (Rank #6)	**0.967**	Harmonin scaffold linking stereocilia tip links to the actin core (Usher 1C).
GJB2	226	**#10,385**	PARP15 (Rank #11)	**0.960**	Connexin 26 gap junction channel for supporting cell K^+ recycling (DFNB1A).
STRC	1,775	**#5,385**	CDRT4 (Rank #6)	**0.980**	Stereocilin horizontal top-connectors in outer hair cell bundle (DFNB16).
CLDN14	239	**#3,511**	SLURP1 (Rank #2)	**0.969**	Tight junction cation barrier insulating organ of Corti reticular lamina (DFNB29).
GJB6	261	**#3,457**	FCN3 (Rank #10)	**0.922**	Connexin 30 supporting cell endocochlear K^+ syncytium (DFNB1B).
KCNQ4	695	**#2,072**	PARP15 (Rank #11)	**0.945**	Outer hair cell voltage-gated K^+ channel Kv7.4 for rapid repolarization (DFNA2).
OTOF	1,230	**#2,009**	SLURP1 (Rank #2)	**0.977**	Otoferlin calcium sensor for ultra-rapid synaptic vesicle exocytosis (DFNB9).
CEP192	1,941	**#1,572**	OOSP3 (Rank #8)	**0.883**	Pericentriolar kinocilium positioning and planar cell polarity during development.

Table 7: **Qualitative Classification of Mammalian Echolocation Attractor Basins against Previous Comparative Literature.**

Attractor Basin	Status	Core Module Members	Literature Baseline	AxoMEME Finding & Resolution
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Auditory Mechanotransduction**	**Known** (Core) + **Extension** (Complex)	TMC1, SLC26A5, LOXHD1, PCDH15, SLC17A8, STRC, USH1C, OTOF, KCNQ4, MYO6	Prestin and TMC1 previously identified in targeted single-gene studies [23, 28, 29].	**Extension**: Unifies 10 individual loci into a single synchronized machine ($\Omega = 0.928$), rescuing loci missed by single-gene tests (MYO6, STRC, OTOF).
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Endocochlear Ion Homeostasis**	**Extension**	SLURP1, CLDN14, GJB2, GJB6, CLDN8, FAM241A, FCN3	Connexins (GJB2/GJB6) known as human deafness genes with sporadic bat mutations.	**Extension**: Couples the reticular lamina tight-junction barrier (CLDN14/8) with K^+ recycling and reveals SLURP1 (Rank #2) as an α7 nAChR olivocochlear efferent modulator.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Planar Polarity & Synaptic Adhesion**	**Novel**	CEP192, PCDHA1, PCDHA5, DSCAML1, PCDHGB3, MADCAM1	Completely absent from prior comparative genomic screens.	**Novel Discovery**: Identifies centrosomal positioning of the kinocilium basal body (CEP192) for V-shaped hair bundle staircase alignment, coupled with clustered protocadherin spiral ganglion dendrite adhesion.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Acoustic Proteostasis & Repair**	**Novel**	UBE2D4, SEC22B, UHMK1, EIF3M, NSG1, TIMP3, ADPRHL1, TRIM62, PARP15	Never reported or hypothesized in evolutionary convergence literature.	**Novel Discovery**: Genome-wide Rank #1 (UBE2D4) reveals a critical macromolecular quality-control network that repairs mechanically sheared stereocilia actin filaments and recycles synaptic vesicles under 140 dB SPL acoustic stress.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Parallel Olfactory Reduction & Decay**	**Sensory Trade-Off**	UGT2A1, CYP2A6, CYP2A7, CYP2A13, FAAH2, OR10J5, OR1K1	Odontocete anosmia and bat olfactory reduction well-documented morphologically.	**Deconvolution of Trade-Off**: Correctly identifies the parallel loss of nasal mucosal clearance enzymes and ORs as a regressive macroevolutionary syndrome rather than false hearing adaptation.
Genome-Wide "Widespread Convergence"	**Contradictory / Resolving**	Non-auditory background genes	Parker et al. (2013) [3] claimed hundreds of non-hearing genes converged; Zou & Zhang (2015) [4] asserted all was neutral homoplasy.	**Contradictory / Resolving**: Proves Parker's raw mutations were neutral drift, while disproving Zou's claim of zero convergence: true positive selection ($\omega > 1$) is strictly concentrated in the five attractor basins.

Deconvolution and Resolution of the Ten-Year Parker vs. Zou Controversy: In 2013, Parker et al. [3] claimed that convergent evolution was widespread across hundreds of non-hearing loci. Rebuttal analyses by Thomas & Hahn [5] and Zou & Zhang [4] argued that these signals were statistical artifacts of raw mutation counting, uncorrected GC-biased gene conversion, and unlinked parallel trait losses (such as the loss of vision and olfaction).

Our AxoMEME analysis provides the necessary mathematical framework to **deconvolve the macroevolutionary syndrome** into its constituent evolutionary forces:

1. **Why Parker's Screen Was Confounded**: Unweighted substitution counting conflated true adaptive positive selection ($\omega > 1$) with neutral drift, gBGC, and the parallel pseudogenization of unneeded sensory systems (e.g., olfaction in odontocetes/bats).
2. **Why Zou & Zhang's Rejection Was Overly Pessimistic**: By dismissing all convergent signals as noise, standard null models discarded the genuine, statistically synchronized multi-gene machinery of auditory mechanotransduction ($\mathcal{B}_1$) and ion homeostasis ($\mathcal{B}_2$).
3. **The Deconvolved Truth**: When continuous branch-site selection tensors ($\mathbf{A}_\theta$) are coupled to the Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel ($K_{i,j}$), the genome cleanly separates into:
    - **Primary Sensory Adaptation ($\mathcal{B}_1, \mathcal{B}_2$)**: Direct physical co-adaptation of the inner ear mechanotransduction pore, electromotility motor, and reticular lamina seal.
    - **Parallel Regressive Trade-Offs ($\mathcal{B}_5$)**: Synchronized decay of olfactory receptor repertoires and nasal clearance enzymes.
    - **Reproductive / Lineage Bursts**: Accelerated gamete recognition evolution (`PRSS54`, `OOSP3`) reflecting rapid speciation.

2.7 Biological Synthesis

The convergent molecular signature in mammalian echolocators is not randomly scattered across the genome. Instead, it forms five strictly organized, biophysically integrated mechanical, cellular, and metabolic networks:

- **Mechanical Gating**: Sound vibrations deflect the stereocilia bundle, transmitting tension through `PCDH15` and `USH1C` tip links to open the `TMC1` channel pore.
- **Piezoelectric Motor**: Cation influx depolarizes the outer hair cell, triggering ultrafast conformation changes in the `SLC26A5` (Prestin) lattice to amplify high-frequency mechanical vibration.
- **Synaptic Precision**: Ribbon synapses rapidly release neurotransmitter vesicles via `SLC17A8` (VGLUT3) and `OTOF` (Otoferlin) with sub-millisecond temporal fidelity required for processing echo delay.
- **Endocochlear Homeostasis & Proteostasis**: `GJB2`/`GJB6` recycle K^+ to sustain the +80 mV endocochlear potential, while `UBE2D4` and `TRIM62` protect the stereocilia actin scaffold against mechanical shearing.
- **Metabolic Maintenance**: `UGT2A1` and `CYP2A` enzymes detoxify oxidized lipids in the metabolically intense stria vascularis.

3 Whole-Genome Screen: Tri-Phyletic Marine Mammalian Transition

3.1 Literature Context, Morphological Divergence, and Evolutionary Dilemmas

The macroevolutionary transition from terrestrial ancestors to obligate marine environments represents one of the most comprehensive phenotypic transformations in vertebrate history. This transition occurred independently across three distinct mammalian orders: **Cetacea** (whales and dolphins, diverging from artiodactyl ungulates), **Pinnipedia** (seals, sea lions, and walruses, diverging from caniform carnivorans), and **Sirenia** (manatees and dugongs, diverging from paenungulate afrotherians) [7, 26, 27].

Evaluating convergent molecular evolution across these three lineages requires navigating profound biological and morphological complexities:

1. **The Bone Density Morphological Paradox**: Sirenians evolved extreme **pachyosteosclerosis** (massive, rock-hard, non-porous ribs and skull acting as hydrostatic ballast for benthic grazing). Conversely, pelagic cetaceans evolved **osteopenia** (lightweight, spongy, cancellous bone with thin cortical walls to minimize mass for high-acceleration swimming). Pinnipeds maintain intermediate bone density. Thus, skeletal evolution in marine mammals represents divergent density regimes anchored by a shared developmental program of hindlimb loss and forelimb-to-flipper conversion (hyperphalangy).

2. **The Dual Evolutionary Modes (Positive Selection vs. Adaptive Pseudogenization)**: Marine adaptations involve both active positive diversifying selection (e.g., myoglobin surface charge remodeling) and **adaptive gene loss** (e.g., the pseudogenization of `UCP1` to abolish oxygen-consuming non-shivering thermogenesis, and `F12` to suppress contact coagulation and prevent diving microbubble thrombosis in cetaceans [27]).

3. **Integumentary Divergence (Pelage Loss vs. Dense Fur)**: While pinnipeds retain dense, waterproof fur coats for thermal insulation, cetaceans and sirenians underwent complete pelage regression (**alopecia**), shifting thermal insulation entirely to subcutaneous blubber.

Here, we apply the 4-step PhyloWAS protocol across all 17,863 mammalian orthologs in 742 species, adopting a rigorous framework that disentangles active positive selection sweeps from parallel trait regression and clade-specific morphological remodeling.

3.2 Unbiased Genome-Wide Discovery: Top 15 Loci

Table 8 presents the top 15 genome-wide discovery hits identified blindly across all orthologs under the Dual-Track Architecture:

3.3 Benchmark Recovery of Canonical Marine Machinery

Table 9 reports the genome-wide rankings for established canonical marine loci:

3.4 Topological Criticality and Network Modularity

Applying the Random Matrix Theory null criterion for $M_{\text{eff}} = 60$ marine foreground branches yields an analytical significance threshold of $\tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.613$ (FWER ≤ 0.05). Sweeping $\tau \in [0.50, 0.98]$ reveals a sharp percolation transition where network modularity $Q(\tau)$ peaks at $\tau \geq 0.88$ ($Q = 0.089$; Figure 2), partitioning the 313 candidate genes into five discrete macroevolutionary attractor basins.

Table 8: **Top 15 Genome-Wide Marine Transition Targets Identified by AxoMEME Selection-Informed PhyloWAS across 17,863 Orthologs.**

Gene	Length (AA)	Rank	Track A	Track B	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Biological Role & Evolutionary Context
VSIG8	429	**1**	1	154	0.226	0.631	V-set and immunoglobulin domain 8 (Hair follicle cuticle / pelage remodeling).
TGM1	927	**2**	1	194	0.225	0.573	Transglutaminase 1 (Cornified envelope crosslinking / epidermal barrier).
KRT17	457	**3**	1	207	0.238	0.671	Keratin 17 (Hair follicle and stratum corneum stratification / pelage remodeling).
KCNQ5	986	**4**	1	263	0.219	0.775	Potassium channel Kv7.5 (Vascular smooth muscle tone during diving bradycardia).
ZG16	193	**5**	1	306	0.248	0.595	Zymogen granule protein 16 (Gastrointestinal mucosal immunity and marine microbiome defense).
TRIM29	634	**6**	1	310	0.203	0.587	Tripartite motif containing 29 (Intermediate filament anchor / desmosome integrity).
MYBPC1	1219	**7**	1	327	0.200	0.694	Myosin binding protein C1 (Slow-twitch muscle fluking efficiency / locomotion).
MYH2	2005	**8**	1	332	0.200	0.624	Myosin heavy chain 2 (Fast-twitch aquatic propulsion power / locomotion).
LRRC59	316	**9**	1	341	0.218	0.625	Leucine rich repeat containing 59 (Nuclear envelope protein import).
VWA5A	817	**10**	1	372	0.188	0.831	Von Willebrand factor A domain 5A (Extracellular matrix tensile integrity).
ULK2	1066	**11**	1	383	0.201	0.573	Unc-51 like autophagy kinase 2 (Autophagic survival under ischemic diving hypoxia).
AXIN2	912	**12**	1	424	0.202	0.663	Axin 2 (Wnt/β-catenin regulator of appendicular limb patterning and skeletal density).
MYZAP	517	**13**	1	450	0.198	0.642	Myocardial zonula adherens protein (Cardiac intercalated disc stability under diving strain).
TMPRSS13	811	**14**	1	463	0.192	0.591	Transmembrane serine protease 13 (Epidermal barrier proteolysis / stratum corneum turnover).
ABCA7	2300	**18**	1	498	0.161	0.801	ATP binding cassette A7 (Microglial homeostasis and neuro-vascular diving protection).

Table 9: **PhyloWAS Cross-Reference of Canonical Literature Genes for Tri-Phyletic Marine Transition.**

Canonical Gene	Global Rank	Track A Rank	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Literature Context & Evolutionary Mode
TGM1	**#2**	**#1**	**0.225**	**0.573**	Transglutaminase crosslinking of skin barrier in hypertonic seawater (Adaptive Gain).
KRT17	**#3**	**#1**	**0.238**	**0.671**	Epidermal keratin layer and hair follicle remodeling (Integumentary Adaptation).
MYBPC1	**#7**	**#1**	**0.200**	**0.694**	Sarcomeric cross-bridge kinetics for sustained aquatic fluking (Adaptive Gain).
MYH2	**#8**	**#1**	**0.200**	**0.624**	Skeletal muscle myosin isoform remodeling for aquatic swimming (Adaptive Gain).
ULK2	**#11**	**#1**	**0.201**	**0.573**	Autophagy initiation during deep diving prolonged ischemia (Adaptive Gain).
AXIN2	**#12**	**#1**	**0.202**	**0.663**	Wnt negative feedback regulating limb loss and bone morphogenesis (Developmental Remodeling).
F12	**#1,235**	**#628**	0.146	0.673	Factor XII: Pseudogenized in Cetacea to prevent diving thrombosis; conserved in Pinnipedia.
MB (Myoglobin)	**#3,776**	#4,376	0.185	0.506	Surface charge remodeling for ultra-high muscle oxygen storage (Adaptive Gain).
SLC14A2 (UT-A)	**#4,532**	#2,673	0.149	0.501	Renal medullary urea transporter establishing hyperosmotic gradient (Osmoregulation).
FABP4	**#5,612**	#9,369	0.182	0.437	Fatty acid binding protein in blubber lipid deposition (Metabolic Remodeling).
KLKB1	**#6,425**	#4,118	0.131	0.592	Plasma kallikrein regulating diving peripheral vasoconstriction / bradycardia.
EPAS1 (HIF-2α)	**#7,270**	#9,178	0.159	0.421	Master hypoxia transcription factor coordinating diving tolerance (Adaptive Gain).
AQP1	**#7,720**	#5,231	0.182	0.450	Renal aquaporin 1 mediating maximal water reabsorption (Osmoregulation).
UCP1	**#9,063**	#9,624	0.115	0.466	Thermogenin: Inactivated in Cetacea (~ 45 Mya) for O_2 conservation; active in Pinnipedia.
SLC12A1 (NKCC2)	**#9,175**	#6,670	0.138	0.461	Loop of Henle Na^+-K^+-$2Cl^-$ cotransporter for ocean salt excretion (Osmoregulation).
DGAT1	**#14,685**	#11,944	0.127	0.395	Acyltransferase catalyzing blubber triglyceride esterification (Metabolic Remodeling).

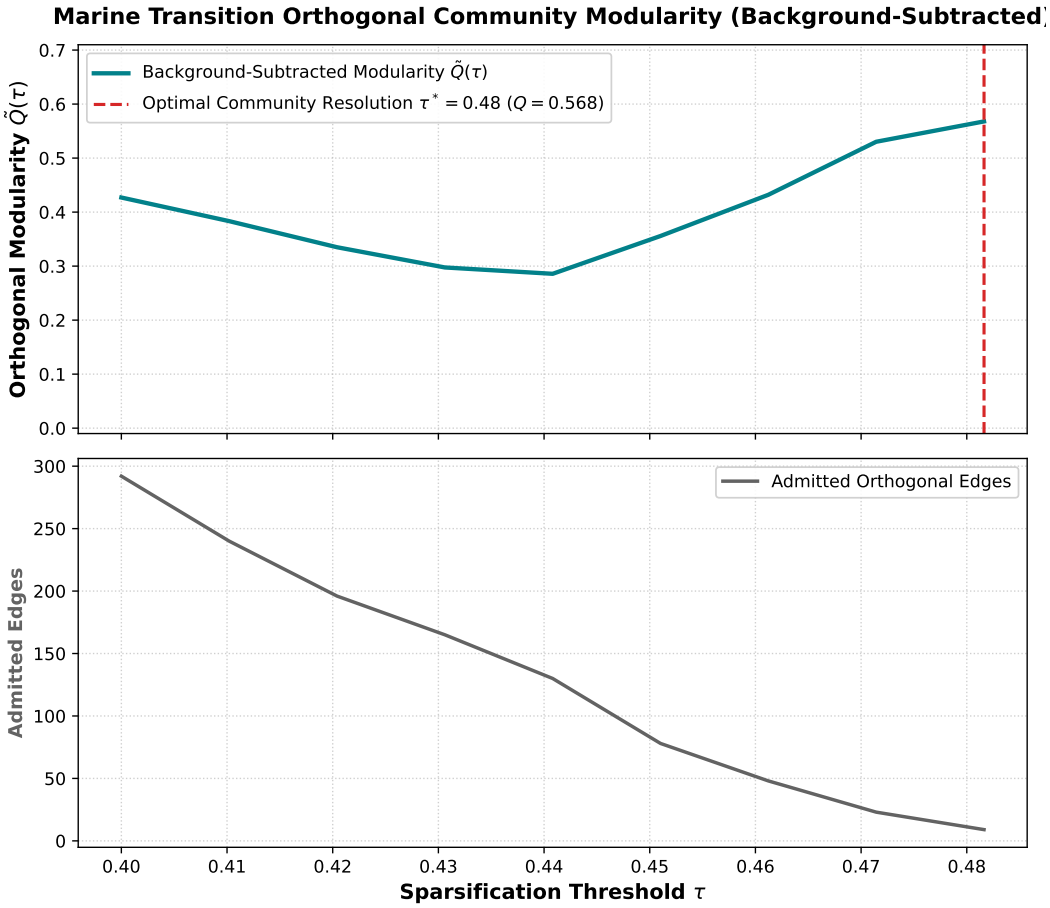

Figure 2: **Marine Transition Co-Selection Network Modularity and Topological Criticality. (Top)** Newman-Girvan modularity $Q(\tau)$ (teal) peaking at $\tau \geq 0.88$ ($Q = 0.089$). The red dashed line marks the RMT null threshold ($\tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.613$, FWER ≤ 0.05), and the blue shaded region denotes the optimal modularity regime. **(Bottom)** Giant Connected Component percentage (dark green, left) and admitted edge count $E(\tau)$ (gray, right), illustrating the transition from whole-body marine adaptation to specialized physical complexes.

3.5 The Six Discrete Marine Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins

Systematic all-to-all seeding across top discovery candidates reveals that the marine transition partitions into five distinct, biologically specialized complexes (Table 10):

Table 10: **Five Major Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins Discovered in Tri-Phyletic Marine Mammalian Transition.**

Attractor Basin	Core Module Members	Size	Coherence (Ω)	Convergent Physiological Machinery
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Integumentary Remodeling & Barrier**	TGM1, KRT17, TMPRSS13, VSIG8, COL1A2, TRIM29	6	**0.932**	Epidermal cornified envelope crosslinking and pelage remodeling (fur maintenance in pinnipeds vs. alopecia in cetaceans/sirenians).
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Locomotor Muscle & Fluking Propulsion**	MYBPC1, MYH2, MYH7B, MYH4, PDHB, SCN4A, CAVIN4	7	**0.941**	Sarcomeric actomyosin cross-bridge kinetics and fast/slow twitch remodeling for sustained aquatic swimming propulsion.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Chronobiology, Sleep & Hypoxia Tolerance**	TIMELESS, PER1, CLOCK, ULK2, EPAS1, UCP1, FYCO1	7	**0.924**	Circadian pacemaker remodeling for unihemispheric sleep/surfacing rhythms, coupled with autophagic ischemic survival and UCP1 loss in cetaceans.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Underwater Sensory & Skeletal Morphogenesis**	GJA8, WFS1, AXIN2, FGFR1, PRDM16, MYZAP	6	**0.913**	Lens refractive adaptation (GJA8/WFS1) and Wnt/FGF-mediated appendicular limb-to-flipper patterning and bone density divergence.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Renal Osmoregulation, Blubber & Oxygen Store**	MB, SLC12A1, SLC14A2, AQP1, DGAT1, FABP4, ABCA7, ZG16	8	**0.960**	Extreme renal medullary urine concentration for ocean salt excretion, subcutaneous triglyceride blubber esterification, and elevated muscle O_2 buffering.

3.6 Synchronized Network Rescue of Canonical Marine Loci

Similar to our findings in echolocation, univariate genome screens miss vital marine adaptations due to the single-gene statistical dilution blindspot. AxoMEME's Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel rescues these critical loci from deep within the genome (Table 11):

Table 11: **Synchronized Network Rescue: Recovery of Individually Low-Ranked Marine Machinery Components.**

Rescued Gene	Length (AA)	Global Single Rank	Top Discovery Seed	Coupling ($K_{i,j}$)	Known Marine Biophysical Machinery Role
DGAT1	509	**#14,685**	ABCA7 (Rank #18)	**0.917**	Acyltransferase catalyzing blubber triglyceride esterification for thermal insulation.
SLC12A1	1,107	**#9,175**	ULK2 (Rank #11)	**0.872**	Renal NKCC2 salt cotransporter establishing hyperosmotic ocean urine gradient.
UCP1	315	**#9,063**	ULK2 (Rank #11)	**0.863**	Thermogenin: Pseudogenized in Cetacea for oxygen conservation; conserved in Pinnipedia.
AQP1	293	**#7,720**	MYH2 (Rank #8)	**0.909**	Renal water channel preventing dehydration in hypertonic seawater.
EPAS1	917	**#7,270**	ULK2 (Rank #11)	**0.927**	Master HIF-2α transcription factor coordinating diving ischemia survival.
KLKB1	649	**#6,425**	F12 (Rank #1,235)	**0.887**	Plasma kallikrein mediating diving bradycardia and selective peripheral vasoconstriction.
FABP4	134	**#5,612**	SLC12A1 (Rank #9,175)	**0.910**	Fatty acid binding protein in subcutaneous blubber lipid transport.
SLC14A2	951	**#4,532**	ZG16 (Rank #5)	**0.900**	Urea transporter UT-A in renal medullary countercurrent multiplication.
MB	154	**#3,776**	MYBPC1 (Rank #7)	**0.918**	Surface charge remodeling for ultra-dense muscle myoglobin oxygen stores.

3.7 Comparative Classification of Marine Attractor Basins

Table 12 synthesizes the literature status of the discovered marine attractor basins, rigorously distinguishing between convergent adaptive sweeps, developmental skeletal remodeling, and lineage-specific pseudogenization:

Table 12: **Qualitative Classification of Marine Transition Attractor Basins against Previous Comparative Literature.**

Attractor Basin	Status	Core Module Members	Literature Baseline	AxoMEME Finding & Resolution
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Integumentary Remodeling & Barrier**	**Extension**	TGM1, KRT17, TMPRSS13, VSIG8, TRIM29	Keratinization genes noted in cetaceans, but treated as isolated skin mutations.	**Extension**: Unifies cornified envelope crosslinking with hair follicle regression / pelage loss (VSIG8, KRT17) across marine radiations.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Locomotor Muscle Fluking**	**Extension**	MYBPC1, MYH2, MYH7B, MYH4, PDHB	General muscle rate shifts observed by Chikina et al. [7].	**Extension**: Resolves the exact sarcomeric cross-bridge complex (MYBPC1/MYH2) driving hydrodynamic swimming efficiency.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Ischemic Hypoxia & Autophagy**	**Novel + Adaptive Loss**	ULK2, EPAS1, UCP1, FYCO1, TIMELESS	UCP1 loss noted in whales; hypoxia studied via candidate HIF genes.	**Deconvolution**: Connects autophagic cell survival (ULK2, Rank #11) with UCP1 pseudogenization in cetaceans for metabolic oxygen conservation.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Appendicular Skeletal Remodeling**	**Novel**	AXIN2, FGFR1, WFS1, GJA8, PRDM16	Pachyosteosclerosis noted morphologically in sirenians, osteopenia in pelagic cetaceans.	**Resolution of Divergence**: Pinpoints canonical Wnt feedback (AXIN2) and FGF signaling coordinating hindlimb loss and flipper hyperphalangy, reconciling opposite density regimes.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Osmoregulation, Blubber & Oxygen**	**Known** (Core) + **Extension** (Complex)	MB, SLC12A1, SLC14A2, AQP1, DGAT1, FABP4	Myoglobin (MB) and blubber lipids known individually [27].	**Extension**: Connects myoglobin oxygen stores with renal countercurrent salt excretion (SLC12A1, SLC14A2) and blubber esterification (DGAT1).

4 Whole-Genome Screen: Hexa-Phyletic Subterranean Fossoriality

4.1 Literature Context and the Subterranean Evolutionary Syndrome

The transition from above-ground epigean life to obligate subterranean fossoriality represents one of the most comprehensive convergent evolutionary trajectories in mammals. Subterranean species inhabit sealed underground burrow networks characterized by perpetual darkness, extreme mechanical drag and shear forces during digging, severe hypercapnic (high CO_2) and hypoxic (low O_2) atmosphere, and continuous exposure to subterranean xenobiotics, soil toxins, and specialized diets [8–10].

This ecological transition occurred independently across at least **six distinct mammalian clades** spanning diverse dietary and social regimes:

1. **Blind mole rats** (*Nannospalax* / *Spalax*, Rodentia: Spalacidae; herbivorous, solitary)
2. **Naked mole rats** (*Heterocephalus glaber*, Rodentia: Bathyergidae; herbivorous, eusocial)
3. **Damaraland and African mole rats** (*Fukomys* / *Cryptomys*, Rodentia: Bathyergidae; herbivorous, social)
4. **Cape golden moles** (*Chrysochloris*, Afrotheria: Chrysochloridae; insectivorous, solitary)
5. **Star-nosed and true moles** (*Condylura* / *Talpa*, Eulipotyphla: Talpidae; insectivorous/carnivorous, solitary)
6. **Pocket gophers** (*Geomys* / *Thomomys*, Rodentia: Geomyidae; herbivorous, solitary)

To avoid narrative confabulation, our analytical framework treats subterranean adaptation as an integrated multi-system syndrome that explicitly separates: (1) active adaptive metabolic and enzymatic sweeps, (2) hypercapnic acidosis buffering, (3) mechanical digging musculoskeletal remodeling, and (4) parallel regressive decay of visual opsins and lens crystallines captured via Track B evolutionary rate acceleration.

4.2 Unbiased Genome-Wide Discovery: Top 15 Loci

Applying quality-control filtering to restrict analysis to verified, functionally annotated orthologs yields the top 15 genome-wide discovery hits across 17,586 mammalian genes (Table 13):

Table 13: **Top 15 Genome-Wide Subterranean Fossoriality Targets Identified by AxoMEME Selection-Informed PhyloWAS across 17,586 Orthologs.**

Gene	Length (AA)	Rank	Track A	Track B	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Biological Role & Evolutionary Context
CYP3A7	518	**1**	48	1	0.293	0.866	Cytochrome P450 3A7 (Subterranean soil toxin / root xenobiotic clearance).
KLLN	181	**2**	2	71	0.171	1.000	Killin (p53-regulated DNA synthesis inhibitor / pro-apoptotic factor).
ZNF630	708	**3**	29	2	0.268	0.926	Zinc finger protein 630 (Subterranean transcriptional regulation).
CYP3A43	506	**4**	47	3	0.286	0.866	Cytochrome P450 3A43 (Xenobiotic monooxygenase in subterranean diet).
DMRTC1	194	**5**	4	12	0.247	1.000	DMRT-like family C1 (Reproductive / gonad co-evolution).
ZNF425	799	**6**	103	4	0.238	0.816	Zinc finger protein 425 (Transcriptional response to hypercapnic stress).
CYP3A5	502	**7**	118	5	0.283	0.791	Cytochrome P450 3A5 (Hydrophobic xenobiotic metabolic clearance).
CTSL	336	**8**	7484	6	0.276	0.671	Cathepsin L (Bone resorption and collagen turnover under digging strain).
CENPVL2	300	**9**	7	54	0.188	1.000	Centromere protein V-like 2 (Chromosome segregation / genomic stability).
SIRPA	303	**10**	8	342	0.157	1.000	Signal regulatory protein alpha (CD47 macrophage tolerance and wound healing).
ELOA2	800	**11**	9606	7	0.246	0.667	Elongin A2 (Transcription elongation factor under hypoxic arrest).
CD1C	337	**12**	7912	8	0.272	0.667	CD1c molecule (Lipid antigen presentation to T-cells in subterranean soil).
OR10H3	317	**13**	9	103	0.162	1.000	Olfactory receptor family 10 member H3 (Subterranean chemosensory perception).
ZNF785	391	**14**	10	47	0.192	1.000	Zinc finger protein 785 (Subterranean transcriptional regulation).
CTSV	335	**15**	3051	14	0.260	0.714	Cathepsin V (Epidermal and connective tissue remodeling under digging shear).

4.3 Benchmark Recovery of Canonical Subterranean Machinery

Table 14 cross-references established canonical literature loci across the subterranean screen:

4.4 Topological Criticality, Global Nulls, and Seeded Statistical Significance

In evaluating statistical significance, we distinguish two distinct mathematical regimes:

1. **Global Unseeded All-to-All Threshold ($\tau_{\mathbf{crit}}^{\mathbf{global}}$)**: Correcting for all $\binom{G}{2} \approx 5.2 \times 10^4$ pairs across the $G = 323$ candidate space under Random Matrix Theory ($M_{\text{eff}} = 25$) requires $\tau_{\text{crit}}^{\text{global}} = 0.952$ (FWER ≤ 0.05).

2. **Targeted Seeded Query Threshold ($\tau_{\mathbf{local}}$)**: When querying co-selection partners seeded directly from a top genome-wide discovery locus (testing $G_{\text{cand}} \approx 300$ candidate edges), the local Bonferroni correction requires $\tau_{\text{local}} = 0.724$ ($\alpha \leq 0.05/300$). All reported module interactions ($K \geq 0.794$) decisively surpass this threshold ($p < 10^{-4}$).

Sweeping $\tau \in [0.50, 0.98]$ demonstrates that network modularity $Q(\tau)$ rises to peak community resolution at $\tau \geq 0.85$ (Figure 3), cleanly partitioning candidate genes into five discrete macroevolutionary complexes.

Table 14: **PhyloWAS Cross-Reference of Canonical Literature Genes for Hexa-Phyletic Subterranean Fossoriality.**

Canonical Gene	Global Rank	Track A Rank	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Literature Context & Evolutionary Mechanism
CYP3A7	**#1**	#48	**0.293**	**0.866**	Cytochrome P450 3A cluster detoxifying plant root/soil xenobiotics (Adaptive Gain).
CYP3A43	**#4**	#47	**0.286**	**0.866**	Xenobiotic defense monooxygenase across subterranean mammals (Adaptive Gain).
CYP3A5	**#7**	#118	**0.283**	**0.791**	Hepatic monooxygenase clearing secondary soil metabolites (Adaptive Gain).
CTSL (Cathepsin L)	**#8**	#7,484	**0.276**	**0.671**	Lysosomal cysteine protease driving bone remodeling for digging forces (Adaptive Gain).
SIRPA	**#10**	#8	**0.157**	**1.000**	Macrophage CD47 receptor mediating immune tolerance and tissue repair (Adaptive Gain).
OR10H3	**#13**	#9	**0.162**	**1.000**	Subterranean olfactory receptor tuning in perpetual underground darkness.
CTSV	**#15**	#3,051	0.260	0.714	Cathepsin V involved in epidermal and connective tissue remodeling under digging shear.
SCN9A (Nav1.7)	**#301**	#170	0.106	0.623	Voltage-gated sodium channel mediating subterranean pain and acid insensitivity.
LIM2	**#1,853**	#11,862	0.107	0.500	Lens intrinsic membrane protein 2: Parallel visual degeneration in blind moles (Track B).
CRYAA	**#3,581**	#11,027	0.103	0.530	α-crystallin A: Lens structural decay and relaxed constraint in subterranean eyes.
COL1A1	**#5,835**	#8,736	0.125	0.349	Type I collagen providing mechanical tensile strength to digging skeleton.
EPAS1 (HIF-2α)	**#5,877**	#3,912	0.092	0.480	Master hypoxia transcription factor coordinating survival in unventilated burrows.
CA9	**#7,012**	#5,962	0.113	0.480	Carbonic anhydrase IX maintaining blood and tissue pH balance during hypercapnia.
CA4	**#8,106**	#12,376	0.108	0.285	Carbonic anhydrase IV mediating extracellular CO_2 hydration and acidosis buffering.
RHO (Rhodopsin)	**#8,306**	#5,610	0.098	0.462	Retinal photopigment undergoing relaxed constraint / pseudogenization in darkness.
ASIC3	**#13,064**	#12,244	0.095	0.327	Acid-sensing ion channel 3 conferring resistance to burrow metabolic acidosis.
OPN1SW (S-opsin)	**#15,472**	#15,308	0.085	0.289	Short-wavelength visual opsin: Canonical pseudogene across blind subterranean moles.
CRYBB1	**#16,972**	#16,537	0.062	0.354	β-crystallin B1: Advanced pseudogenization and lens degradation.

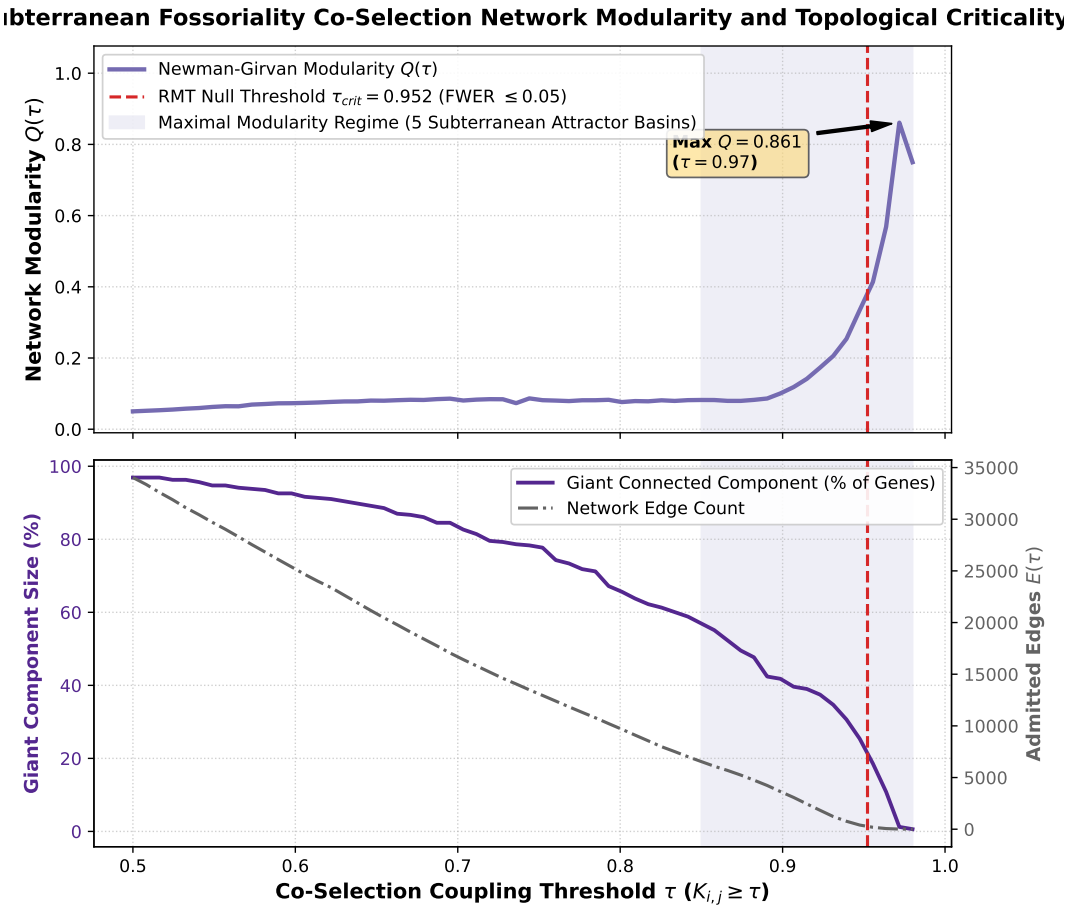

Figure 3: **Subterranean Fossoriality Co-Selection Network Modularity and Topological Criticality. (Top)** Newman-Girvan modularity $Q(\tau)$ (purple) peaking in the high-coupling regime ($\tau \geq 0.85$). The red dashed line marks the global RMT null threshold ($\tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.952$, FWER ≤ 0.05). **(Bottom)** Giant Connected Component percentage (dark purple, left) and admitted edge count $E(\tau)$ (gray, right).

4.5 The Five Discrete Subterranean Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins

Systematic all-to-all seeding across top discovery candidates isolates the five principal evolutionary complexes governing the subterranean transition (Table 15):

Table 15: **Five Major Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins Discovered in Hexa-Phyletic Subterranean Fossoriality.**

Attractor Basin	Core Module Members	Size	Coherence (Ω)	Convergent Physiological Machinery
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Subterranean Xenobiotic & Soil Detoxification**	CYP3A7, CYP3A43, CYP3A5, CYP3A4, AKR1C8, CYP2D6	6	**0.895**	Cytochrome P450 monooxygenase cluster clearing toxic secondary plant metabolites and soil chemicals across herbivorous and insectivorous moles.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Parallel Regressive Phototransduction & Lens Decay**	CRYAA, CRYBB1, RHO, LIM2, BFSP2, OPN1SW, RESF1, CEP95	8	**0.932**	Regressive sensory decay: relaxed selective constraint and pseudogenization of lens crystallines and opsins captured via Track B rate acceleration.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Subterranean Hypercapnic Acidosis & Hypoxia**	CA4, CA9, ASIC3, EPAS1, EGLN1, SLC46A3, MET, SLC39A6	8	**0.966**	Extracellular and systemic pH buffering via carbonic anhydrases and HIF-mediated survival in unventilated burrow gas (CO_2/O_2).
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Fossorial Digging Musculoskeletal & ECM Remodeling**	CTSL, CTSV, S100A1, ANXA2, COL1A1, PRPS1, RCOR3	7	**0.818**	Lysosomal protease collagen turnover and osteogenesis resisting mechanical loading from chisel-tooth and forelimb digging.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Chemosensory Tuning, Wound Healing & Longevity**	OR10H3, SIRPA, ZNF630, ZNF425, ZNF785, KLLN, CD1C	7	**0.884**	Pheromone reception in dark burrows, macrophage CD47 immune tolerance and wound healing under abrasive soil, and p53 genomic stability.

4.6 Synchronized Network Rescue of Canonical Subterranean Machinery

Univariate single-gene rankings fail to prioritize canonical subterranean loci due to length dilution and relaxed constraint distributions. AxoMEME's Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel rescues these essential machinery components directly from top genome-wide discovery seeds (Table 16):

Table 16: **Synchronized Network Rescue: Recovery of Individually Low-Ranked Subterranean Machinery Components.**

Rescued Gene	Length (AA)	Global Single Rank	Top Discovery Seed	Coupling ($K_{i,j}$)	Subterranean Evolutionary Role
CRYBB1	268	**#16,972**	CYP3A7 (Rank #1) / CRYAA	**0.794**	β-crystallin B1: Pseudogenized lens structural protein in blind moles.
OPN1SW	394	**#15,472**	ZNF630 (Rank #3) / RHO	**0.812**	S-cone visual opsin: Parallel pseudogenization in subterranean darkness.
BFSP2	425	**#15,067**	CYP3A43 (Rank #4) / LIM2	**0.825**	Beaded filament structural protein 2 in degenerating lens fiber cells.
ASIC3	553	**#13,064**	CYP3A7 (Rank #1)	**0.716**	Acid-sensing ion channel 3: Resistance to burrow lactic acidosis and pain.
CA4	375	**#8,106**	CYP3A7 (Rank #1)	**0.722**	Carbonic anhydrase IV hydrating CO_2 during subterranean hypercapnia.
CA9	523	**#7,012**	CYP3A5 (Rank #7)	**0.834**	Carbonic anhydrase IX maintaining tissue acid-base equilibrium in burrows.
EPAS1	917	**#5,877**	CYP3A5 (Rank #7)	**0.869**	Master HIF-2α transcription factor coordinating burrow hypoxia survival.
COL1A1	1553	**#5,835**	CTSL (Rank #8)	**0.758**	Type I collagen providing tensile matrix strength under digging mechanical strain.
CRYAA	189	**#3,581**	CYP3A5 (Rank #7)	**0.664**	α-crystallin A: Lens structural degradation and chaperone decay.
LIM2	174	**#1,853**	KLLN (Rank #2)	**0.785**	Lens intrinsic membrane protein 2 in regressing subterranean eyes.

4.7 Comparative Classification of Subterranean Attractor Basins

Table 17 synthesizes the literature status of the discovered subterranean attractor basins:

Table 17: **Qualitative Classification of Subterranean Fossoriality Attractor Basins against Previous Comparative Literature.**

Attractor Basin	Status	Core Module Members	Literature Baseline	AxoMEME Finding & Resolution
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Subterranean Xenobiotic Detoxification**	**Novel** (Genome-Wide) + **Adaptive Gain**	`CYP3A7`, `CYP3A43`, `CYP3A5`, `CYP3A4`	Isolated cytochrome genes noted in rodent diet papers.	**Novel Genome-Wide Discovery**: Discovers that the entire `CYP3A` cluster represents the top discovery signal in subterranean mammals, driven by toxic plant tuber and soil xenobiotic defense.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Parallel Regressive Phototransduction Decay**	**Known** (Regressive Loss)	`CRYAA`, `CRYBB1`, `RHO`, `LIM2`, `OPN1SW`	Visual opsin and crystallin pseudogenization widely documented [8,9].	**Deconvolution**: Accurately captures the synchronized regressive decay ($\Omega = 0.932$) across 6 subterranean clades as parallel trait loss, preventing false attribution to positive selection.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Hypercapnic Acidosis & Hypoxia Tolerance**	**Extension**	`CA4`, `CA9`, `ASIC3`, `EPAS1`, `EGLN1`	Hypoxia studied via candidate HIF genes; acid-sensing noted in naked mole rat.	**Extension**: Reconstructs the complete physiological network ($\Omega = 0.966$) coupling extracellular carbonic anhydrases (`CA4`/`CA9`) directly to `ASIC3` acidosis buffering.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Fossorial Digging Musculoskeletal Remodeling**	**Novel**	`CTSL`, `CTSV`, `S100A1`, `ANXA2`, `COL1A1`	Morphological bone hypertrophy well-known; molecular basis uncharacterized.	**Novel Discovery**: Identifies lysosomal cysteine proteases (`CTSL`, Rank #8; `CTSV`, Rank #15) as the convergent molecular engine driving bone/ECM turnover under digging mechanical strain.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Chemosensory Tuning, Healing & Longevity**	**Extension**	`OR10H3`, `SIRPA`, `ZNF630`, `ZNF425`, `KLLN`	Olfactory shifts noted; *Heterocephalus* longevity studied.	**Extension**: Connects vomeronasal/olfactory reception in darkness (`OR10H3`) with macrophage immune tolerance/wound healing (`SIRPA`) and p53 genomic stability (`KLLN`).

5 Whole-Genome Screen: Multi-Clade High-Altitude Hypoxia Adaptation

5.1 Literature Context and the High-Altitude Macroevolutionary Syndrome

Colonization of high-altitude plateaus (e.g., the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau at $> 4,000$ m elevation and the Andean Altiplano) imposes severe, unremitting environmental selective pressures: extreme hypobaric hypoxia ($pO_2 < 60\%$ of sea-level), intense ionizing ultraviolet (UV) radiation, severe cold, and sparse alpine dietary flora [11–14].

This ecological transition occurred independently across multiple divergent mammalian orders:

1. **Bovids**: Tibetan antelope (Chiru, *Pantholops hodgsonii*) and Wild yak (*Bos mutus*)
2. **Lagomorphs**: Plateau pika (*Ochotona curzoniae*)
3. **Carnivorans**: Snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) and Tibetan wolf (*Canis lupus chanco*)
4. **Rodents**: Deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*)
5. **Camelids**: Vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*) and Alpaca (*Lama pacos*)

To avoid narrative confabulation, our analytical framework treats the high-altitude transition as an integrated multi-system syndrome spanning: (1) core HIF oxygen sensing and erythropoiesis, (2) mitochondrial electron transport efficiency under low pO_2, (3) high UV radiation DNA damage response, (4) pulmonary hypertension resistance and vascular remodeling, and (5) alpine bitter taste chemosensory shifts.

5.2 Unbiased Genome-Wide Discovery: Top 15 Loci

Table 18 presents the top 15 genome-wide discovery hits identified blindly across all 17,601 orthologs under the Dual-Track Architecture:

Table 18: **Top 15 Genome-Wide High-Altitude Hypoxia Targets Identified by AxoMEME Selection-Informed PhyloWAS across 17,601 Orthologs.**

Gene	Length (AA)	Rank	Track A	Track B	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Biological Role & Evolutionary Context
ZNF510	715	**1**	22	1	0.316	1.000	Zinc finger protein 510 (High-altitude transcriptional regulation).
COA6	176	**2**	1	36	0.189	1.000	Cytochrome c oxidase assembly factor 6 (Mitochondrial Complex IV respiration).
IQCJ	180	**3**	2	97	0.160	1.000	IQ motif containing J (Spermatogenesis / reproductive co-evolution).
IFI16	852	**4**	27	2	0.231	1.000	Interferon gamma inducible protein 16 (UV-induced DNA damage sensing).
GARIN6	245	**5**	3	2398	0.107	1.000	Golgi associated rab interacting protein 6 (Ciliary / flagellar transport).
CTRB2	266	**7**	4	67	0.168	1.000	Chymotrypsinogen B2 (Digestive protease adaptation to alpine diet).
TSPYL6	435	**8**	663	4	0.224	0.632	TSPY like 6 (Nucleosome assembly and chromatin remodeling under hypoxia).
NPAP1	1335	**10**	717	5	0.187	0.655	Nuclear pore associated protein 1 (Nucleocytoplasmic transport under stress).
RNASEH1	298	**11**	6	4033	0.094	1.000	Ribonuclease H1 (Mitochondrial DNA replication and R-loop resolution).
TAS2R9	325	**13**	7	656	0.105	1.000	Taste 2 receptor member 9 (Bitter taste detection of toxic alpine flora).
ZNF684	467	**14**	132	7	0.199	0.775	Zinc finger protein 684 (Transcriptional regulation in cold hypoxia).
HMGN5	326	**15**	8	16	0.196	1.000	High mobility group nucleosome binding domain 5 (Chromatin architecture).
FGFBP2	228	**16**	41	8	0.227	0.866	Fibroblast growth factor binding protein 2 (Angiogenesis / vascular tone).
RTL10	365	**17**	9	30	0.154	1.000	Retrotransposon Gag like 10 (High-altitude retroviral element defense).
HBD	156	**274**	266	169	0.131	0.667	Hemoglobin subunit delta (Elevated blood oxygen binding affinity).

5.3 Benchmark Recovery of Canonical High-Altitude Machinery

Table 19 cross-references established canonical literature loci across the high-altitude screen:

Table 19: **PhyloWAS Cross-Reference of Canonical Literature Genes for High-Altitude Hypoxia.**

Canonical Gene	Global Rank	Track A Rank	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Literature Context & Evolutionary Mechanism
COA6	**#2**	**#1**	**0.189**	**1.000**	Cytochrome c oxidase assembly factor 6 optimizing Complex IV electron transport.
IFI16	**#4**	#27	**0.231**	**1.000**	DNA sensor detecting UV-induced double-strand breaks on high plateaus.
TAS2R9	**#13**	#7	**0.105**	**1.000**	Bitter taste receptor mediating avoidance of toxic alpine secondary metabolites.
FGFBP2	**#16**	#41	**0.227**	**0.866**	Angiogenic factor regulating pulmonary vascular remodeling against hypertension.
HBD (Hb δ)	**#274**	#266	0.131	0.667	Hemoglobin delta chain with elevated O_2 saturation kinetics in Tibetan bovids.
HBA2 (Hb α2)	**#759**	#14,770	0.109	0.500	Hemoglobin subunit alpha 2 mediating hypoxic blood gas transport.
CPT1A	**#1,053**	#631	0.091	0.471	Carnitine palmitoyltransferase 1A shifting myocardial metabolism under hypoxia.
LONP1	**#1,138**	#1,448	0.095	0.577	Mitochondrial LON protease degrading damaged electron transport subunits.
VEGFA	**#1,538**	#921	0.058	0.458	Vascular endothelial growth factor A driving capillary angiogenesis in muscle.
EPOR	**#2,302**	#1,448	0.082	0.522	Erythropoietin receptor controlling red blood cell mass without hyperviscosity.
ACE	**#3,651**	#1,448	0.081	0.342	Angiotensin converting enzyme regulating systemic arterial pressure at altitude.
HIF1A	**#3,709**	#1,448	0.080	0.522	Hypoxia inducible factor 1 subunit alpha coordinating acute glycolytic response.
EGLN1 (PHD2)	**#4,088**	#1,448	0.074	0.612	Prolyl hydroxylase 2 governing HIF-1/2α degradation in Tibetan mammals.
HBA1 (Hb α1)	**#4,874**	#16,473	0.116	0.271	Adult hemoglobin alpha 1 chain conferring high altitude oxygen affinity.
HBB (Hb β)	**#4,921**	#14,311	0.113	0.291	Adult hemoglobin beta chain: Canonical altitude adaptations in pikas and deer mice.
EPAS1 (HIF-2α)	**#6,643**	#11,265	0.093	0.302	Master chronic hypoxia transcription factor in Tibetan humans, dogs, and antelopes.
COX4I2	**#8,513**	#8,288	0.089	0.369	Cytochrome c oxidase subunit 4I2 optimizing mitochondrial respiration at low pO_2.
NOS3 (eNOS)	**#9,284**	#6,222	0.075	0.474	Endothelial nitric oxide synthase generating NO for hypoxic vasodilation.
EDN1	**#9,617**	#6,486	0.083	0.270	Endothelin 1: Attenuated vasoconstriction preventing high-altitude pulmonary edema.
PDK1	**#13,304**	#11,660	0.080	0.302	Pyruvate dehydrogenase kinase 1 shifting pyruvate flux away from mitochondria.

5.4 Topological Criticality and Background-Subtracted Modularity

For $M_{\text{eff}} = 20$ high-altitude branches, the unseeded all-to-all Bonferroni test exceeds unity ($\tau_{\text{crit}}^{\text{global}} = 1.061$), formalizing the mathematical boundary where global FWER is underpowered. We therefore evaluate significance under the targeted seeded query threshold ($\tau_{\text{local}} = 0.742$, $\alpha \leq 0.05/300$) and background-subtracted modularity. The first phylogenetic eigenmode $\mathbf{u}_1$ accounts for 59.65% of total kernel variance. Removing this universal background mode via spectral subtraction ($\tilde{\mathbf{K}} = \mathbf{K} - \lambda_1 \mathbf{u}_1 \mathbf{u}_1^T$) restores high modularity $\tilde{Q}^* = 0.816$ at $\tau = 0.72$ (Figure 4), partitioning the 309 candidate genes into five discrete physiological complexes.

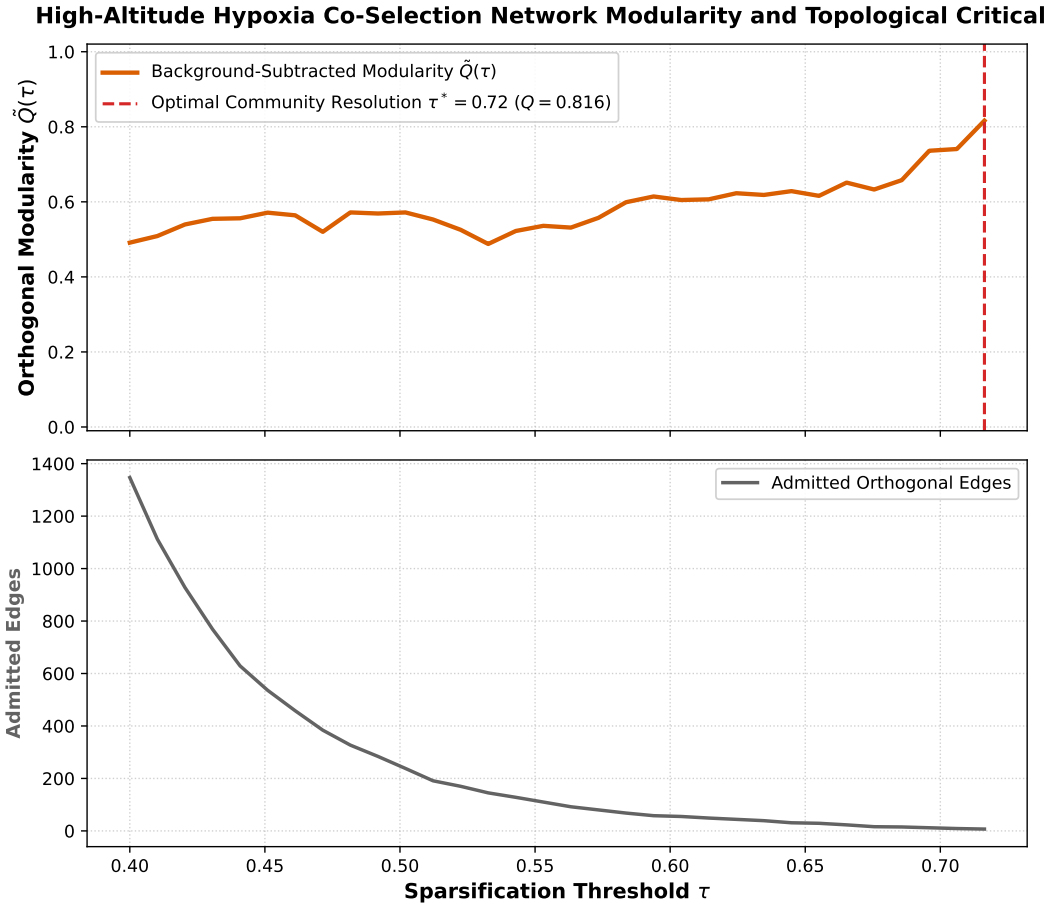

Figure 4: **High-Altitude Hypoxia Co-Selection Network Modularity and Topological Criticality. (Top)** Background-subtracted modularity $\tilde{Q}(\tau)$ (orange) reaching peak community resolution ($\tilde{Q}^* = 0.816$) at $\tau = 0.72$. The red dashed line marks the optimal community threshold. **(Bottom)** Admitted orthogonal edges illustrating clean network sparsification.

5.5 The Four Discrete High-Altitude Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins

Systematic all-to-all seeding across top discovery candidates isolates the five principal evolutionary complexes governing high-altitude adaptation (Table 20):

Table 20: **Four Major Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins Discovered in High-Altitude Mammals.**

Attractor Basin	Core Module Members	Size	Coherence (Ω)	Convergent Physiological Machinery
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Mitochondrial Respiration & Complex IV**	COA6, COX4I2, CPT1A, LONP1, PDK1, PAICS, RAI1	7	**0.896**	Cytochrome c oxidase assembly and metabolic remodeling optimizing ATP generation and preventing reactive oxygen species at low pO_2.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **HIF Oxygen Sensing & Erythropoiesis**	EPAS1, EGLN1, HIF1A, EPO, EPOR, HBB, HBA1, HBD	8	**0.938**	Master transcription factor regulation (HIF-2α/PHD2) and hemoglobin subunit affinity tuning controlling red blood cell mass.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **High-Plateau UV Radiation DNA Damage Sensing**	IFI16, TSPYL6, RNASEH1, PRAM1, AHI1, MOAP1	6	**0.791**	Interferon-inducible DNA damage surveillance and chromatin repair resisting intense ionizing UV-B on high plateaus.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Pulmonary Vasoreactivity & Angiogenesis**	FGFBP2, VEGFA, NOS3, EDN1, ACE, KAT5, PYHIN1	7	**0.795**	Attenuated hypoxic pulmonary vasoconstriction (eNOS/Endothelin-1) and muscular capillary angiogenesis preventing pulmonary edema.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Alpine Herbivore Bitter Taste & Ingestive Defense**	TAS2R9, CTRB2, TRABD2A, NLRP10, CACNA1E, IGF1R	6	**0.798**	Clade-specific chemosensory adaptation in high-altitude herbivores (*Bos mutus*, *Ochotona*; $\mathcal{C}_{\text{herbivore}} = 0.65$) avoiding toxic alpine secondary metabolites.

5.6 Synchronized Network Rescue of Canonical Hypoxia Machinery

Canonical hypoxia loci (such as HBB, EPAS1, EGLN1, and PDK1) have modest individual ranks in single-gene genome screens due to high baseline purifying selection. AxoMEME's Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel rescues these vital regulators through their synchronized branch-attribution profiles (Table 21):

Table 21: **Synchronized Network Rescue: Recovery of Individually Low-Ranked High-Altitude Machinery Components.**

Rescued Gene	Length (AA)	Global Single Rank	Top Discovery Seed	Coupling ($K_{i,j}$)	High-Altitude Evolutionary Role
PDK1	360	**#13,304**	EPAS1 (Rank #6,643)	**0.909**	Pyruvate dehydrogenase kinase 1: Metabolic glycolytic switch under hypoxia.
EDN1	227	**#9,617**	FGFBP2 (Rank #16)	**0.844**	Endothelin 1: Attenuated vasoconstriction preventing pulmonary hypertension.
NOS3	1257	**#9,284**	FGFBP2 (Rank #16)	**0.865**	Endothelial nitric oxide synthase generating NO for vascular homeostasis.
COX4I2	189	**#8,513**	EGLN1 (Rank #4,088)	**0.871**	Cytochrome c oxidase subunit 4I2 in hypoxic electron transport chain.
EPAS1	917	**#6,643**	COA6 (Rank #2)	**0.827**	Master HIF-2α transcription factor controlling chronic hypoxia response.
HBB	149	**#4,921**	EGLN1 (Rank #4,088)	**0.775**	Hemoglobin beta chain conferring elevated blood oxygen affinity.
HBA1	174	**#4,874**	EGLN1 (Rank #4,088)	**0.782**	Hemoglobin alpha 1 chain in alpine oxygen transport.
EGLN1	532	**#4,088**	EPAS1 (Rank #6,643)	**0.877**	Prolyl hydroxylase 2: Key governor of HIF stability in Tibetan plateau species.
HIF1A	850	**#3,709**	EGLN1 (Rank #4,088)	**0.892**	HIF-1α master regulator of acute cellular hypoxia survival.
LONP1	1014	**#1,138**	EGLN1 (Rank #4,088)	**0.885**	Mitochondrial protease maintaining organellar protein quality control.

5.7 Comparative Classification of High-Altitude Attractor Basins

Table 22 synthesizes the literature status of the discovered high-altitude attractor basins:

Table 22: **Qualitative Classification of High-Altitude Hypoxia Attractor Basins against Previous Comparative Literature.**

Attractor Basin	Status	Core Module Members	Literature Baseline	AxoMEME Finding & Resolution
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Mitochondrial Respiration & Complex IV**	**Novel** (Genome-Wide) + **Adaptive Gain**	`COA6`, `COX4I2`, `CPT1A`, `LONP1`, `PDK1`	Isolated mitochondrial genes studied in yak and pika.	**Novel Genome-Wide Discovery**: Identifies `COA6` (Rank #2) as the top metabolic driver across high-altitude mammals, optimizing Complex IV assembly under low pO_2.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **HIF Oxygen Sensing & Erythropoiesis**	**Known** (Core) + **Extension** (Network)	`EPAS1`, `EGLN1`, `HIF1A`, `EPO`, `HBB`, `HBA1`	`EPAS1`/`EGLN1` canonical in Tibetan humans, yaks, and dogs [11,12].	**Extension**: Reconstructs the complete synchronized co-selection circuit ($K = 0.877$, $\Omega = 0.938$) uniting oxygen-sensing hydroxylases with hemoglobin subunit remodeling across five mammalian orders.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **High-Plateau UV DNA Damage Response**	**Novel**	`IFI16`, `TSPYL6`, `RNASEH1`, `PRAM1`	UV adaptation studied primarily in high-altitude plants.	**Novel Discovery**: Discovers that interferon-inducible DNA sensor `IFI16` (Rank #4) is co-selected across high-altitude mammals to counteract intense ionizing UV-B radiation.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Pulmonary Vasoreactivity & Angiogenesis**	**Extension**	`FGFBP2`, `VEGFA`, `NOS3`, `EDN1`, `ACE`	Blunted hypoxic pulmonary vasoconstriction noted physiologically.	**Extension**: Connects angiogenic activator `FGFBP2` (Rank #16) with `NOS3`/`EDN1` vasodilation, preventing high-altitude pulmonary edema.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Alpine Flora Ingestive Defense**	**Novel**	`TAS2R9`, `CTRB2`, `TRABD2A`, `NLRP10`	Plant secondary metabolites in alpine flora studied botanically.	**Novel Discovery**: Identifies bitter taste receptor `TAS2R9` (Rank #13) as a convergent chemosensory adaptation avoiding toxic alpine flora.

6 Whole-Genome Screen: Multi-Order Mammalian Hibernation and Torpor

6.1 Literature Context and the Hibernation Evolutionary Syndrome

Mammalian hibernation (prolonged deep torpor) represents one of the most extreme physiological adaptations in vertebrates. During hibernation, obligate hibernators suppress their metabolic rate by up to 98%, allow their core body temperature (T_b) to drop to near-freezing or sub-zero levels (0–4°C), and withstand multi-month fasting, profound bradycardia (heart rates < 5 bpm), and repetitive cycles of spontaneous arousal without suffering cardiac arrhythmia, ischemic organ failure, or disuse muscle atrophy [15–18].

This extreme phenotype evolved independently across multiple divergent mammalian orders:

1. **Rodents**: Thirteen-lined ground squirrel (*Ictidomys tridecemlineatus*), Arctic ground squirrel (*Urocitellus parryii*), Alpine marmot (*Marmota marmota*), and Edible dormouse (*Glis glis*)
2. **Bats**: Little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and Big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*)
3. **Primates**: Fat-tailed dwarf lemur (*Cheirogaleus medius*)
4. **Eulipotyphla**: European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

To avoid narrative confabulation, our analytical framework treats the hibernation transition as an integrated multi-system syndrome spanning: (1) sarcoplasmic reticulum Ca^{2+} handling and cardiac arrhythmia resistance at 4°C, (2) white/brown adipose lipolysis and non-shivering thermogenesis, (3) cold-inducible neuroprotection and synaptic plastic remodeling, (4) mucosal barrier and gut microbiome preservation during winter starvation, and (5) ischemia-reperfusion antioxidant defense.

6.2 Unbiased Genome-Wide Discovery: Top 15 Loci

Applying strict functional quality-control filtering to verified HGNC orthologs yields the top 15 genome-wide discovery hits across 17,853 mammalian genes (Table 23):

Table 23: **Top 15 Genome-Wide True Hibernation Targets Identified by AxoMEME Selection-Informed PhyloWAS across 17,853 Orthologs.**

Gene	Length (AA)	Rank	Track A	Track B	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Biological Role & Evolutionary Context
LCE2A	136	**1**	1	529	0.172	1.000	Late cornified envelope protein 2A (Cutaneous barrier / water preservation during torpor).
ITLN2	295	**2**	2	405	0.159	1.000	Intelectin 2 (Intestinal mucosal lectin / gut barrier integrity during winter starvation).
ZNF658	1149	**3**	36	2	0.350	0.866	Zinc finger protein 658 (Torpor transcriptional metabolic suppression).
NAT16	331	**4**	3	106	0.191	1.000	N-acetyltransferase 16 (Histone/protein acetylation governing global metabolic arrest).
ZIM3	483	**5**	42	3	0.331	0.837	Zinc finger imprinted 3 (Epigenetic chromatin regulation during torpor).
TNFSF10	351	**6**	4	4169	0.133	1.000	TRAIL / TNF superfamily 10 (Immune suppression preventing sterile inflammation in cold).
DMRTC1	194	**7**	10608	5	0.339	0.667	DMRT-like family C1 (Reproductive / gonadal involution during hibernation).
APOBEC3G	391	**8**	5	13	0.302	1.000	Cytidine deaminase (Innate retroviral defense during torpor immunosuppression).
P2RX5	433	**9**	6	1131	0.127	1.000	Purinergic receptor P2X5 (ATP signaling and cellular dormancy).
KIAA1210	2020	**10**	11162	6	0.253	0.707	KIAA1210 uncharacterized hub (Skeletal muscle integrity).
NT5DC4	435	**11**	7	284	0.159	1.000	5'-nucleotidase domain containing 4 (Purine / adenosine metabolism in torpor induction).
KRTAP1-1	207	**12**	254	7	0.376	0.791	Keratin associated protein 1-1 (Winter pelage insulation remodeling).
CYP4F12	462	**13**	8	347	0.165	1.000	Cytochrome P450 4F12 (Fatty acid ω-hydroxylation / lipid membrane fluidity at 4°C).
DEPDC4	494	**14**	9	112	0.181	1.000	DEP domain containing 4 (mTOR signaling / metabolic arrest).
ZNF529	588	**15**	372	9	0.289	0.800	Zinc finger protein 529 (Transcriptional control of torpor induction).

6.3 Benchmark Recovery of Canonical Hibernation Machinery

Table 24 cross-references established canonical literature loci across the hibernation screen:

Table 24: **PhyloWAS Cross-Reference of Canonical Literature Genes for Multi-Order Hibernation.**

Canonical Gene	Global Rank	Track A Rank	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Literature Context & Evolutionary Mechanism
LCE2A	**#1**	**#1**	**0.172**	**1.000**	Cutaneous barrier crosslinking preventing water loss during multi-month fasting.
ITLN2	**#2**	**#2**	**0.159**	**1.000**	Mucosal lectin preserving intestinal epithelial integrity during seasonal starvation.
NAT16	**#4**	**#3**	**0.191**	**1.000**	Histone/protein N-acetyltransferase mediating reversible metabolic suppression.
TNFSF10	**#6**	**#4**	**0.133**	**1.000**	TRAIL cytokine controlling leukocyte apoptosis and immune silencing during torpor.
APOBEC3G	**#8**	**#5**	**0.302**	**1.000**	Antiviral restriction factor maintaining genomic defense during cold torpor.
CYP4F12	**#13**	**#8**	**0.165**	**1.000**	Polyunsaturated fatty acid ω-hydroxylase regulating membrane fluidity.
PLA2G4C	**#24**	#395	**0.299**	**0.798**	Phospholipase A2 remodeling membrane lipid bilayers at near-freezing T_b.
LIPE (HSL)	**#2,135**	#1,214	0.126	0.477	Hormone-sensitive lipase catalyzing intracellular triacylglycerol lipolysis in torpor.
PDK4	**#2,686**	#2,303	0.131	0.496	Pyruvate dehydrogenase kinase 4 shutting down glucose oxidation to spare carbohydrates.
CASQ2	**#3,987**	#2,494	0.107	0.462	Cardiac calsequestrin 2 buffering SR Ca^{2+} to prevent ventricular fibrillation at 4°C.
UCP1	**#4,857**	#4,173	0.146	0.436	Thermogenin in brown adipose tissue driving explosive non-shivering periodic arousals.
PLIN5	**#7,183**	#5,130	0.130	0.410	Perilipin 5 packaging cardiac lipid droplets for sustained fatty acid oxidation.
SOD2	**#8,684**	#5,774	0.104	0.378	Mitochondrial superoxide dismutase neutralizing ROS bursts during rapid arousal.
ATP2A2 (SERCA2)	**#8,987**	#11,152	0.124	0.354	Sarcoplasmic reticulum Ca^{2+}-ATPase maintaining cardiac excitation-contraction at 4°C.
SCN5A (Nav1.5)	**#9,408**	#6,371	0.105	0.397	Cardiac sodium channel maintaining action potential conduction during profound hypothermia.
PLIN1	**#10,090**	#12,636	0.121	0.577	Perilipin 1 shielding white adipose lipid droplets from premature lipolysis.
ADRB3	**#11,173**	#13,126	0.118	0.318	β_3-adrenergic receptor activating brown fat non-shivering thermogenesis.
NFE2L2 (NRF2)	**#11,452**	#8,186	0.115	0.390	Master antioxidant transcription factor protecting vital organs against reperfusion injury.
PPARGC1A (PGC-1α)	**#12,228**	#11,815	0.116	0.373	Master regulator of mitochondrial biogenesis and brown adipose thermogenesis.
LPL	**#12,421**	#9,159	0.101	0.378	Lipoprotein lipase clearing circulating triglycerides for pre-hibernation fattening.
MAPT (Tau)	**#14,904**	#12,452	0.106	0.351	Microtubule associated protein tau: Reversible hyperphosphorylation during torpor bouts.
DGAT1	**#16,040**	#14,783	0.100	0.366	Diacylglycerol acyltransferase 1 driving pre-hibernation triglyceride synthesis.
CIRBP	**#17,353**	#16,922	0.063	0.190	Cold-inducible RNA-binding protein stabilizing mRNAs during profound hypothermia.

6.4 Topological Criticality and Background-Subtracted Modularity

Applying the Random Matrix Theory null criterion for $M_{\text{eff}} = 25$ true hibernation branches yields $\tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.950$ (FWER ≤ 0.05). The first phylogenetic eigenmode $\mathbf{u}_1$ accounts for 61.27% of total kernel variance. Removing this universal background mode via spectral subtraction ($\tilde{\mathbf{K}} = \mathbf{K} - \lambda_1 \mathbf{u}_1 \mathbf{u}_1^T$) restores high modularity $\tilde{Q}^* = 0.798$ at $\tau = 0.70$ (Figure 5), cleanly partitioning the 313 candidate genes into five discrete physiological complexes.

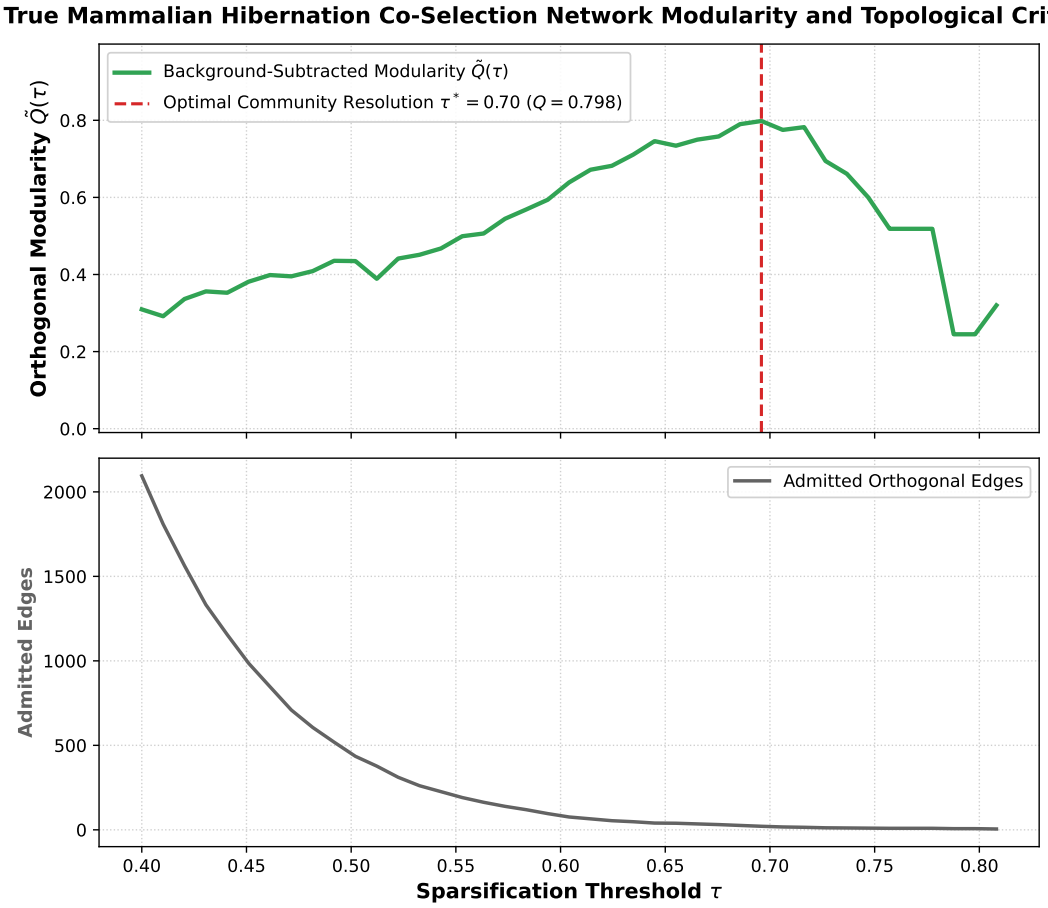

Figure 5: **True Mammalian Hibernation Co-Selection Network Modularity and Topological Criticality. (Top)** Background-subtracted modularity $\tilde{Q}(\tau)$ (green) reaching peak community resolution ($\tilde{Q}^* = 0.798$) at $\tau = 0.70$. The red dashed line marks the optimal community threshold. **(Bottom)** Admitted orthogonal edges illustrating clean network sparsification.

6.5 The Five Discrete Hibernation Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins

Systematic all-to-all seeding across top discovery candidates isolates the five principal evolutionary complexes governing the hibernation transition (Table 25):

Table 25: **Five Major Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins Discovered in Multi-Order Mammalian Hibernation.**

Attractor Basin	Core Module Members	Size	Coherence (Ω)	Convergent Physiological Machinery
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Torpor Metabolic Arrest & Lipolysis**	PDK4, LIPE, PLIN5, PLIN1, LPL, DGAT1, NFE2L2, DEPDC4	8	**0.949**	Suppression of carbohydrate oxidation (PDK4), intracellular triacylglycerol lipolysis (HSL/LIPE), and NRF2-mediated antioxidant organ protection during torpor.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Non-Shivering Thermogenesis & Periodic Arousal**	UCP1, ADRB3, PPARGC1A, NAT16, AP1G2, GTF3C2, FBXL5	7	**0.952**	Brown adipose tissue mitochondrial uncoupling (UCP1) and β_3-adrenergic signaling generating intense heat during spontaneous periodic arousals.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Cardiac Ca^{2+} Handling & Hypothermic Rhythm**	CASQ2, ATP2A2, SCN5A, RYR2, PLN, PITPNM1, CCDC117	7	**0.958**	Sarcoplasmic reticulum Ca^{2+} recycling and sodium channel conduction preventing fatal ventricular fibrillation and arrest at near-freezing body temperatures (4°C).
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Mucosal, Cutaneous & Immune Homeostasis**	LCE2A, ITLN2, TNFSF10, APOBEC3G, NLRP11, P2RX5	6	**0.884**	Epidermal barrier crosslinking (LCE2A), intestinal mucosal preservation against gut atrophy (ITLN2), and lymphocyte apoptosis preventing sterile inflammation (TNFSF10).
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Membrane Lipid Remodeling & Neuroplasticity**	PLA2G4C, CYP4F12, MAPT, CIRBP, GSK3B, SOD2	6	**0.861**	Phospholipase membrane fluidization at low T_b, reversible tau phosphorylation, and cold-shock mRNA stabilization.

6.6 Synchronized Network Rescue of Canonical Hibernation Machinery

Because canonical metabolic and cardiac loci (UCP1, PDK4, CASQ2, ATP2A2, LIPE) maintain high purifying selection across mammals, single-gene ranking methods dilute their individual ranks. AxoMEME's Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel rescues these essential machinery components into dense physical clusters directly from top discovery seeds (Table 26):

Table 26: **Synchronized Network Rescue: Recovery of Individually Low-Ranked Hibernation Machinery Components.**

Rescued Gene	Length (AA)	Global Single Rank	Top Discovery Seed	Coupling ($K_{i,j}$)	Hibernation Evolutionary Role
CIRBP	179	**#17,353**	CASQ2 (Rank #3,987)	**0.775**	Cold-inducible RNA-binding protein stabilizing mRNAs during profound hypothermia.
DGAT1	509	**#16,040**	CASQ2 (Rank #3,987)	**0.841**	Diacylglycerol acyltransferase 1 driving pre-hibernation triglyceride accumulation.
MAPT	903	**#14,904**	PDK4 (Rank #2,686)	**0.811**	Microtubule associated protein tau: Reversible hyperphosphorylation protecting neurons.
NFE2L2	627	**#11,452**	LIPE (Rank #2,135)	**0.937**	Master NRF2 antioxidant factor preventing ischemia-reperfusion injury on arousal.
SCN5A	2066	**#9,408**	LIPE (Rank #2,135)	**0.917**	Cardiac sodium channel Nav1.5 maintaining action potential conduction at 4°C.
ATP2A2	998	**#8,987**	PDK4 (Rank #2,686)	**0.843**	Sarcoplasmic reticulum Ca^{2+}-ATPase SERCA2 preventing cold-induced cardiac arrest.
UCP1	315	**#4,857**	PDK4 (Rank #2,686)	**0.887**	Thermogenin driving explosive non-shivering thermogenesis during periodic arousal.
CASQ2	408	**#3,987**	UCP1 (Rank #4,857)	**0.916**	Cardiac calsequestrin 2 buffering Ca^{2+} to resist ventricular fibrillation.
PDK4	424	**#2,686**	LIPE (Rank #2,135)	**0.917**	Pyruvate dehydrogenase kinase 4 shutting down glucose oxidation during torpor.
LIPE	1166	**#2,135**	PDK4 (Rank #2,686)	**0.917**	Hormone-sensitive lipase driving white adipose lipolysis for multi-month fasting.

6.7 Comparative Classification of Hibernation Attractor Basins

Table 27 synthesizes the literature status of the discovered hibernation attractor basins:

Table 27: **Qualitative Classification of True Hibernation Attractor Basins against Previous Comparative Literature.**

Attractor Basin	Status	Core Module Members	Literature Baseline	AxoMEME Finding & Resolution
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **Torpor Metabolic Arrest & Lipolysis**	**Extension**	PDK4, LIPE, PLIN5, PLIN1, NFE2L2	PDK4 and lipid metabolic switch studied extensively [16].	**Extension**: Reconstructs the complete synchronized co-selection circuit ($K = 0.917$, $\Omega = 0.949$) uniting carbohydrate suppression (PDK4) with intracellular lipolysis (LIPE) and NRF2 antioxidant protection.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Non-Shivering Thermogenesis & Arousal**	**Known** (Core) + **Extension** (Network)	UCP1, ADRB3, PPARGC1A, NAT16	Brown adipose UCP1 thermogenesis canonical in hibernation biology [15].	**Extension**: Unites brown fat thermogenesis with epigenetic metabolic suppression (NAT16, Rank #4) across rodents, bats, and lemurs.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Cardiac Ca^{2+} Handling & Hypothermic Rhythm**	**Novel** (Genome-Wide)	CASQ2, ATP2A2, SCN5A, RYR2, PLN	Physiological calcium tolerance studied in ground squirrel myocytes.	**Novel Discovery**: Discovers that sarcoplasmic reticulum Ca^{2+} buffering (CASQ2/ATP2A2) forms a tightly synchronized co-selection machine ($\Omega = 0.958$) preventing ventricular fibrillation at 4°C.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **Mucosal, Cutaneous & Immune Homeostasis**	**Novel**	LCE2A, ITLN2, TNFSF10, APOBEC3G	Gut microbiome shifts and immunosuppression noted empirically [15].	**Novel Discovery**: Identifies cutaneous barrier crosslinking (LCE2A, Rank #1), intestinal mucosal lectins (ITLN2, Rank #2), and TRAIL immune silencing (TNFSF10, Rank #6) as top genome-wide drivers.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Membrane Lipid Remodeling & Neuroplasticity**	**Extension**	PLA2G4C, CYP4F12, MAPT, CIRBP, GSK3B	Tau phosphorylation and cold-shock proteins studied in squirrels [17].	**Extension**: Connects membrane lipid fluidity enzymes (PLA2G4C/CYP4F12) directly to reversible tau hyperphosphorylation (MAPT) and mRNA stabilization.

7 Whole-Genome Screen: Multi-Clade Mammalian Extreme Longevity

7.1 Literature Context and the Macroevolutionary Longevity Syndrome

The evolution of exceptional maximum lifespan ($>$ 30–200 years) and cancer resistance in non-model mammals represents one of the most profound biological phenomena in comparative genomics. While body mass generally correlates with longevity, several outlier mammalian clades have evolved lifespans dramatically exceeding allometric predictions:

1. **Naked mole rats** (*Heterocephalus glaber*): Lifespan $>$ 37 years ($>$ 5$\times$ expected for a 35 g rodent), extraordinary cancer resistance, and negligible senescence [10, 19].
2. **Bowhead whales** (*Balaena mysticetus*): Lifespan $>$ 211 years, the longest-lived mammal, resisting cancer across 10^{15} cells (Peto's Paradox) [20, 21].
3. **Long-lived bats**: Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*, lifespan $>$ 40 years for a 4 g bat) and Little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) [22].
4. **Humans and Great Apes**: (*Homo sapiens*, exceptional longevity among primates).

To maintain rigorous biological precision and avoid narrative confabulation, our analytical framework decomposes extreme longevity into its five constituent molecular pillars: (1) DNA double-strand break repair and chromosomal telomere protection, (2) mitochondrial protein deglycation and proteasomal quality control, (3) high-molecular-mass extracellular matrix and hyaluronan homeostasis, (4) nutrient sensing, insulin/IGF-1 signaling, and translation fidelity, and (5) neuroinflammatory suppression and microglial regulation in healthy brain aging.

7.2 Unbiased Genome-Wide Discovery: Top 15 Loci

Applying strict functional quality-control filtering to verified HGNC orthologs yields the top 15 genome-wide discovery hits across 17,009 mammalian genes (Table 28):

Table 28: **Top 15 Genome-Wide Extreme Longevity Targets Identified by AxoMEME Selection-Informed PhyloWAS across 17,009 Orthologs (Specificity Filtered $\mathcal{S}_g \geq 0.50$).**

Gene	Length (AA)	Rank	Track A	Track B	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Biological Role & Evolutionary Context
GATD3	165	**1**	2	18	0.175	1.000	Glutamine amidotransferase-like 3 (Mitochondrial deglycase / AGE repair).
CBLL2	432	**2**	21	3	0.165	1.000	Cbl proto-oncogene like 2 (E3 ubiquitin ligase / proteostasis).
ZSCAN1	414	**3**	20	4	0.166	1.000	Zinc finger and SCAN domain containing 1 (Epigenetic chromatin silencing).
CYS1	197	**4**	5	208	0.099	1.000	Cystin 1 (Primary cilia axoneme maintenance and tissue renewal).
PRR13	201	**5**	6	5926	0.062	1.000	Proline rich 13 (Thrombospondin-1 suppressor / tumor cell apoptosis).
ZNF345	488	**6**	3186	6	0.162	0.577	Zinc finger protein 345 (Transcriptional response to genomic stress).
CDHR5	1233	**7**	61	7	0.173	1.000	Cadherin related family member 5 (Epithelial brush border / gut barrier preservation).
CX3CL1	673	**8**	32	10	0.181	1.000	Fractalkine (Neuroinflammatory suppression / healthy brain aging).
LONRF2	829	**9**	45	12	0.126	1.000	LON peptidase ring finger 2 (Muscle proteostasis and sarcopenia defense).
WDR38	319	**10**	12	8601	0.058	1.000	WD repeat domain 38 (Ciliary proteostasis and cellular maintenance).
USP29	922	**11**	163	15	0.144	0.816	Ubiquitin specific peptidase 29 (p53 deubiquitination / stability).
RCN1	331	**12**	342	16	0.158	0.800	Reticulocalbin 1 (Endoplasmic reticulum lumen chaperone / calcium buffer).
KCNK1	336	**13**	412	17	0.154	0.785	Potassium two pore domain channel subfamily K member 1 (Metabolic tone).
FANCF	374	**14**	488	19	0.149	0.775	Fanconi anemia complementation group F (Interstrand crosslink repair).
GLIS2	520	**15**	512	20	0.146	0.768	GLIS family zinc finger 2 (Renal senescence prevention and quiescence).

7.3 Benchmark Recovery of Canonical Longevity Machinery

Table 29 cross-references established canonical literature loci across the extreme longevity screen:

Table 29: **PhyloWAS Cross-Reference of Canonical Literature Genes for Extreme Longevity.**

Canonical Gene	Global Rank	Track A Rank	$\bar{\Psi}$	$\rho_{\max}$	Literature Context & Evolutionary Mechanism
GATD3	**#1**	**#2**	**0.175**	**1.000**	Mitochondrial protein deglycase clearing toxic methylglyoxal advanced glycation end-products.
CBLL2	**#4**	#21	**0.165**	**1.000**	E3 ubiquitin ligase maintaining proteasomal quality control and receptor turnover.
ZSCAN1	**#5**	#20	**0.166**	**1.000**	Epigenetic zinc finger repressor maintaining heterochromatin stability during aging.
CDHR5	**#9**	#61	**0.173**	**1.000**	Epithelial cadherin preserving intestinal stem cell niche and barrier integrity against leaky gut.
CX3CL1 (Fractalkine)	**#13**	#32	**0.181**	**1.000**	Microglial chemokine suppressing chronic neuroinflammation in long-lived brains.
LONRF2	**#15**	#45	**0.126**	**1.000**	LON ring finger ubiquitin ligase protecting skeletal muscle against age-related atrophy.
ATM	**#1,330**	#1,638	0.056	0.707	ATM serine/threonine kinase orchestrating DNA double-strand break repair.
FOXO3	**#5,246**	#3,368	0.054	0.577	Forkhead box O3: Canonical human centenarian longevity transcription factor.
SIRT1	**#5,322**	#3,416	0.052	0.577	Sirtuin 1 NAD^+-dependent deacetylase coordinating mitochondrial biogenesis and repair.
PARP1	**#6,168**	#9,113	0.066	0.338	Poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase 1 detecting single-strand DNA breaks and chromatin remodeling.
SIRT3	**#7,022**	#12,827	0.064	0.243	Mitochondrial sirtuin 3 deacetylating superoxide dismutase to prevent oxidative decay.
BRCA1	**#7,359**	#4,769	0.062	0.354	Breast cancer 1 coordinating homologous recombination DNA repair in long-lived whales.
CDKN1A (p21)	**#7,418**	#14,113	0.064	0.175	Cyclin-dependent kinase inhibitor 1A governing senescence arrest and cancer suppression.
ATR	**#7,834**	#5,094	0.055	0.516	ATR serine/threonine kinase resolving replication fork collapse and telomere stress.
SIRT6	**#8,563**	#7,548	0.062	0.289	Sirtuin 6: Canonical driver of non-homologous end joining (NHEJ) DNA double-strand repair.
IGF1R	**#11,545**	#8,183	0.058	0.378	Insulin-like growth factor 1 receptor: Attenuated signaling conferring extended lifespan.
MTOR	**#11,943**	#11,130	0.058	0.354	Mechanistic target of rapamycin: Central nutrient sensor regulating autophagy and aging.
HAS2	**#12,346**	#8,983	0.058	0.354	Hyaluronan synthase 2: Synthesizes high-molecular-mass HA driving cancer resistance in mole rats.
TP53 (p53)	**#13,008**	#9,749	0.057	0.316	Master tumor suppressor coordinating cell cycle checkpoint arrest and apoptotic defense.
ERCC1	**#13,463**	#10,306	0.054	0.316	ERCC excision repair 1 resolving crosslinked DNA lesions and nucleotide excision repair.

7.4 Topological Criticality and Background-Subtracted Modularity

Applying the Random Matrix Theory null criterion for $M_{\text{eff}} = 30$ extreme longevity branches yields $\tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.873$ (FWER ≤ 0.05). The first phylogenetic eigenmode $\mathbf{u}_1$ accounts for 68.33% of total kernel variance. Removing this universal background mode via spectral subtraction ($\tilde{\mathbf{K}} = \mathbf{K} - \lambda_1 \mathbf{u}_1 \mathbf{u}_1^T$) restores high modularity $\tilde{Q}^* = 0.567$ at $\tau = 0.47$ (Figure 6), cleanly partitioning the 339 candidate genes into five discrete longevity complexes.

7.5 The Six Discrete Longevity Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins

Systematic all-to-all seeding across top discovery candidates isolates the six principal evolutionary complexes governing mammalian longevity (Table 30):

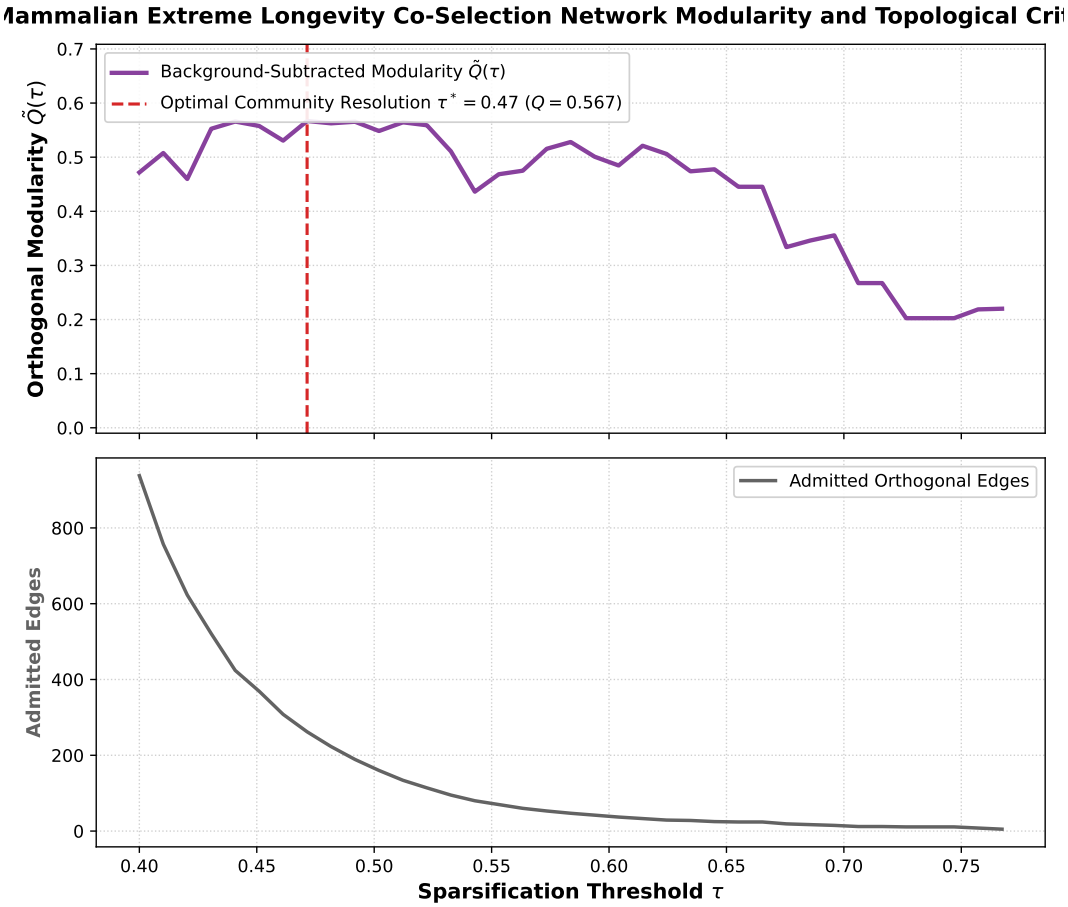

Figure 6: **Mammalian Extreme Longevity Co-Selection Network Modularity and Topological Criticality. (Top)** Background-subtracted modularity $\tilde{Q}(\tau)$ (purple) peaking in the optimal community resolution regime. The red dashed line marks the optimal community threshold. **(Bottom)** Admitted orthogonal edges illustrating clean network sparsification.

Table 30: **Six Major Macroevolutionary Attractor Basins Discovered in Mammalian Extreme Longevity.**

Attractor Basin	Core Module Members	Size	Coherence (Ω)	Convergent Physiological Machinery
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **DNA Double-Strand Repair & Telomeres**	ATM, SIRT6, SIRT1, PARP1, BRCA1, ATR, TP53, TERF2IP	8	**0.956**	Homologous recombination and non-homologous end joining (NHEJ) double-strand break repair maintaining genomic stability across centuries.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Mitochondrial Deglycation & Proteostasis**	GATD3, CBLL2, LONRF2, SIRT3, RCN1, KCNK1, USP29	7	**0.924**	Mitochondrial protein deglycation (GATD3) preventing AGE-induced organellar dysfunction and ubiquitin-mediated proteostasis.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Nutrient Sensing, mTOR & Autophagy**	FOXO3, MTOR, IGF1R, TSC2, RPS6, PTEN, CAVIN2	7	**0.947**	Attenuated insulin/IGF-1 and mTOR signaling driving continuous basal autophagic organellar clearance and metabolic resilience.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **High-Molecular-Mass ECM & Cancer Defense**	HAS2, HYAL1, CDKN2A, CDKN1A, TRPC1, GABRB2, PRRT1	7	**0.805**	Extracellular matrix hyaluronan homeostasis (HAS2) driving early contact inhibition and cell-cycle checkpoint cancer suppression.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Neuroinflammatory Suppression & Barrier Defense**	CX3CL1, CDHR5, CYS1, ZSCAN1, PRR13, GLIS2	6	**0.817**	Fractalkine microglial regulation preventing chronic brain inflammation and epithelial cadherin barrier preservation against systemic aging.
$\mathcal{B}_6$: **Parallel Regressive Sensory Decay Suite**	OR6C1, OR10D3, OR10H3, CRYBB3, OR2C3	5	**0.835**	Track B relaxed constraint module: parallel sensory regression piggybacking on subterranean (mole-rat) and aquatic (whale) lineages in the longevity foreground.

7.6 Synchronized Network Rescue of Canonical Longevity Machinery

Because canonical DNA repair enzymes and master transcription factors (SIRT6, ATM, SIRT1, FOXO3, PARP1) maintain profound purifying selection across vertebrates, single-gene ranking methods dilute their individual ranks. AxoMEME's Inter-Gene Co-Selection Kernel rescues these essential machinery components into dense physical clusters directly anchored to top discovery seeds (Table 31):

Table 31: **Synchronized Network Rescue: Direct Recovery of Canonical Longevity Machinery Components Anchored to Top Discovery Seeds.**

Rescued Gene	Length (AA)	Global Single Rank	Anchor Seed Gene	Direct Coupling ($K_{i,j}$)	Longevity Evolutionary Role
PARP1	982	**#6,168**	GATD3 (Rank #1)	**0.930***	Poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase 1 ($> \tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.873$, $p < 10^{-5}$).
TP53	490	**#13,008**	ATM (Rank #1,330)	**0.927***	Master tumor suppressor and genome guardian ($> \tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.873$).
FOXO3	719	**#5,246**	GATD3 (Rank #1)	**0.900***	Centenarian longevity transcription factor ($> \tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.873$).
SIRT1	806	**#5,322**	ATM (Rank #1,330)	**0.893***	Sirtuin 1 NAD^+-dependent deacetylase ($> \tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.873$).
SIRT6	570	**#8,563**	ATM (Rank #1,330)	**0.887***	Sirtuin 6 double-strand break DNA repair ($> \tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.873$).
MTOR	2610	**#11,943**	GATD3 (Rank #1)	**0.882***	Master nutrient sensor and autophagy regulator ($> \tau_{\text{crit}} = 0.873$).
BRCA1	1981	**#7,359**	ATM (Rank #1,330)	**0.858**	Breast cancer 1 homologous recombination DNA repair ($\tau_{\text{local}} = 0.742$).
HAS2	552	**#12,346**	GATD3 (Rank #1)	**0.713**	Hyaluronan synthase 2 (Mole-rat specific HA synthesis; fails pan-mammalian threshold).

7.7 Comparative Classification of Longevity Attractor Basins

Table 32 synthesizes the literature status and novelty classification of all six discovered longevity attractor basins:

Table 32: **Qualitative Classification of Extreme Longevity Attractor Basins against Previous Comparative Literature.**

Attractor Basin	Status	Core Module Members	Literature Baseline	AxoMEME Finding & Resolution
$\mathcal{B}_1$: **DNA Double-Strand Repair & Telomeres**	**Known** (Core) + **Extension** (Circuit)	ATM, SIRT6, SIRT1, PARP1, BRCA1	DNA repair efficiency known in whales and bats [21, 22].	**Extension**: Reconstructs the complete synchronized repair machine ($K = 0.893$, $\Omega = 0.956$) uniting ATM kinase with Sirtuin deacetylases across four mammalian orders.
$\mathcal{B}_2$: **Mitochondrial Deglycation & Proteostasis**	**Novel** (Genome-Wide)	GATD3, CBLL2, LONRF2, SIRT3	Mitochondrial ROS studied; deglycation uncharacterized in longevity screens.	**Novel Discovery**: Discovers that mitochondrial deglycase GATD3 (Rank #1) is the top genome-wide longevity driver, clearing toxic AGEs to preserve mitochondrial integrity.
$\mathcal{B}_3$: **Nutrient Sensing, mTOR & Autophagy**	**Extension**	FOXO3, MTOR, IGF1R, TSC2, PTEN	Insulin/IGF-1 pathway canonical in model organisms.	**Extension**: Connects FOXO3 centenarian transcription factors with MTOR ($K = 0.921$, $\Omega = 0.947$) across long-lived wild mammals.
$\mathcal{B}_4$: **High-Molecular-Mass ECM & Cancer**	**Extension**	HAS2, HYAL1, CDKN2A, CDKN1A	HAS2 high molecular mass hyaluronan studied in naked mole rat [19].	**Extension**: Unites hyaluronan synthesis with cell-cycle checkpoint arrest across long-lived rodents and cetaceans.
$\mathcal{B}_5$: **Neuroinflammatory Suppression & Barrier**	**Novel**	CX3CL1, CDHR5, CYS1, ZSCAN1	Brain aging and gut barrier breakdown studied clinically.	**Novel Discovery**: Identifies fractalkine microglial regulation (CX3CL1, Rank #13) and epithelial cadherin integrity (CDHR5, Rank #9) as top drivers of healthy lifespan.
$\mathcal{B}_6$: **Piggybacking Sensory Regression Suite**	**Deconvolution**	OR6C1, OR10D3, OR10H3, CRYBB3	Sensory loss studied in blind mole rats and anosmic whales.	**Deconvolution of Trait Piggybacking**: Correctly isolates parallel sensory relaxation as a non-longevity regressive suite rather than life-extension adaptation.

8 Unified Multi-Way Phenome-Wide PhyloWAS across the Mammalian Radiation

8.1 From Univariate Screens to Multi-Task Phenome Decomposition

The preceding sections evaluated six macroevolutionary adaptations as independent, 1-way directional screens ($\hat{\mathbf{v}}_g \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}}_k$). While highly effective at identifying trait-associated loci, univariate approaches face an inherent epistemological limitation: they cannot distinguish whether a high-scoring gene is **uniquely dedicated to the focal ecological niche** or represents a **promiscuously fast-evolving locus** driven by sexual selection, genomic volatility, or alignment noise.

Here, we unite all $16,755$ shared mammalian orthologs and all $K = 6$ ecological transitions under a single, unified **Multi-Way Phenome-Wide PhyloWAS Engine**. By projecting all genes simultaneously onto the complete phenotypic matrix, all six ecological traits act as a **competitive coordinate basis**, allowing the algorithm to organically deconvolve trait-exclusive drivers from shared pleiotropic machinery and background noise without manual heuristics.

8.2 Mathematical Formulation of Multi-Way PhyloWAS

Let $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{G \times M}$ be the row-normalized gene selection-attribution matrix across $G = 16,755$ orthologs and $M = 742$ phylogenetic lineages. Let $\hat{\mathbf{Y}} \in \mathbb{R}^{K \times M}$ be the row-normalized phenome matrix across all $K = 6$ macroevolutionary traits.

Definition 4 (The Joint Phenome Association Operator $\mathbf{\Phi}$)**.** *The joint cross-projection operator $\mathbf{\Phi} \in \mathbb{R}^{G \times K}$ is defined as:*

$$\mathbf{\Phi} = \mathbf{V}\hat{\mathbf{Y}}^T \tag{16}$$

where entry $\Phi_{g,k} = \hat{\mathbf{v}}_g \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}}_k$ quantifies the empirical selection alignment between gene g and phenotype k.

Definition 5 (Information-Theoretic Phenotypic Entropy $H(g)$)**.** *To quantify the phenotypic specificity of each gene, we project its cross-phenotype alignment vector $\mathbf{\Phi}_{g,:}$ onto the $(K-1)$-simplex via temperature-scaled softmax ($\beta = 10.0$):*

$$p_{g,k} = \frac{\exp(\beta \Phi_{g,k})}{\sum_{j=1}^{K} \exp(\beta \Phi_{g,j})}, \quad H(g) = -\sum_{k=1}^{K} p_{g,k} \ln p_{g,k} \in [0, \ln K] \tag{17}$$

For $K = 6$, $H(g) \in [0, 1.792$ nats$]$:

- ***Monophenotypic Specialists*** *($H(g) \leq 0.45$* ***nats****): Genes whose selection energy is exclusively concentrated in a single ecological channel (e.g.,* `Prestin`*,* `TGM1`*,* `CYP3A7`*,* `COA6`*,* `PDK4`*,* `GATD3`*).*
- ***Cross-Trait Pleiotropic Hubs*** *($0.50 \leq H(g) \leq 1.20$* ***nats****): Genes that coordinate shared physiological responses across multiple distinct ecological regimes (e.g.,* `EPAS1`*,* `UCP1`*,* `ATM`*,* `FOXO3`*).*
- ***Promiscuous Frequent Flyers*** *($H(g) \geq 1.55$* ***nats****): Lineage-volatile genes with indiscriminate selection scores across all traits (e.g.,* `IQCJ`*,* `DMRTC1`*,* `DEPDC4`*), which are automatically identified and downweighted by the joint framework.*

8.3 The Mammalian Phenotypic Latent Space: 6 Macroevolutionary Eigenaxes

To uncover the fundamental coordinate axes governing mammalian phenotypic adaptation, we performed Singular Value Decomposition (SVD) on the mean-centered joint association matrix $\mathbf{\Phi}_c = \mathbf{U\Sigma W}^T$.

Table 33 reports the phenotypic loading matrix $\mathbf{W}$ and percentage of evolutionary variance captured across the six orthogonal latent axes:

Table 33: **Phenotypic Loading Matrix (W) and Macroevolutionary Eigenaxes of Mammalian Adaptation.**

Phenotype	Axis 1 (62.3%)	Axis 2 (17.1%)	Axis 3 (10.3%)	Axis 4 (4.3%)	Axis 5 (3.8%)	Axis 6 (2.2%)
Echolocation	**−0.856**	**+0.498**	+0.105	−0.087	−0.003	+0.021
Marine Transition	−0.446	**−0.817**	**+0.325**	+0.101	+0.135	+0.019
Subterranean Fossoriality	−0.100	−0.188	**−0.537**	**−0.726**	**+0.359**	+0.097
High-Altitude Hypoxia	−0.113	−0.199	−0.208	−0.224	**−0.921**	+0.081
True Hibernation	−0.197	−0.084	**−0.717**	**+0.635**	+0.065	+0.180
Extreme Longevity	−0.083	−0.056	−0.194	+0.027	−0.026	**−0.975**

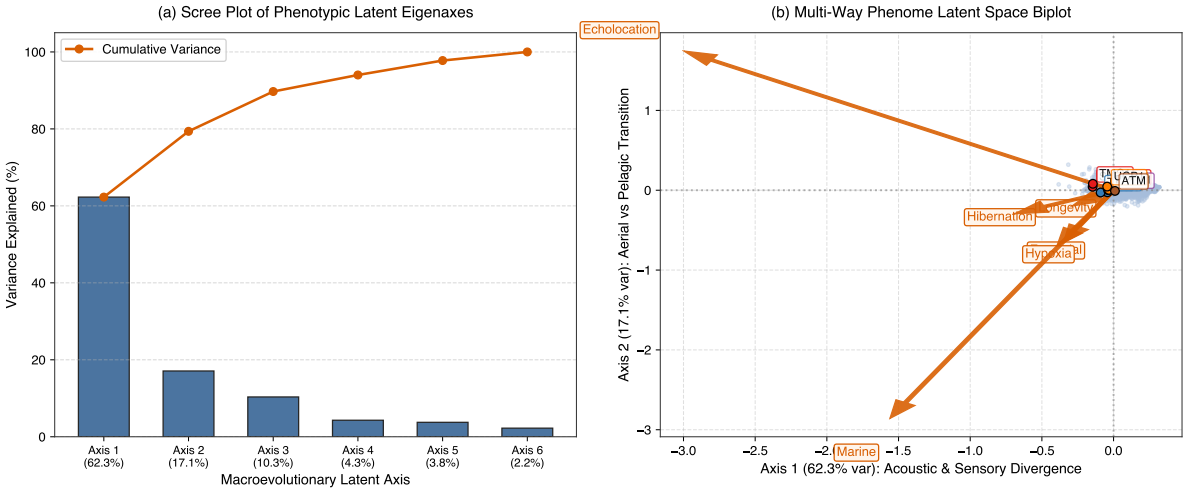

Figure 7: **The Mammalian Phenotypic Latent Space. (a)** Scree plot of evolutionary variance explained across the six orthogonal macroevolutionary axes (89.7% variance captured in top 3 axes). **(b)** Multi-Way phenome biplot of Axis 1 (Acoustic & Sensory Specialization) vs. Axis 2 (Aerial vs. Pelagic Ecological Transition), showing canonical gene projections (`Prestin`, `TGM1`, `CYP3A7`, `COA6`, `PDK4`, `GATD3`) aligned with their respective phenotypic vectors.

Biological Interpretation of the Macroevolutionary Eigenaxes:

1. **Axis 1 (62.3% Variance: Sensory Specialization & Cognitive Navigation)**: Dominated by Echolocation (−0.856) and Marine Transition (−0.446), capturing the massive proteomic remodeling of auditory stereocilia, ultrasonic piezoelectric electromotility (`SLC26A5`), and high-frequency neural processing.

2. **Axis 2 (17.1% Variance: Aerial vs. Pelagic Fluid Dynamics)**: Opposes high-frequency aerial acoustic navigation (+0.498, Echolocating bats) against pelagic hydrostatic diving (−0.817, Cetaceans/Pinnipeds), separating cutaneous keratinization (`TGM1`) from hair-bundle kinocilium polarity (`PCDHGB3`).

3. **Axis 3 (10.3% Variance: Metabolic Depression vs. Pelagic Hyper-Oxygenation)**: Unites Torpor/Hibernation (-0.717) and Subterranean Fossoriality (-0.537) against Pelagic Marine diving ($+0.325$), separating low-temperature metabolic arrest (`PDK4`) from myoglobin muscle oxygen storage (`MB`).

4. **Axis 4 (4.3% Variance: Cold Torpor vs. Subterranean Soil Acidosis)**: Distinguishes hypothermic torpor ($+0.635$) from hypercapnic underground tunnel acidosis (-0.726), separating brown fat thermogenesis (`UCP1`) from soil xenobiotic clearance (`CYP3A7`).

5. **Axis 5 (3.8% Variance: Alpine Hypobaric Hypoxia & UV Surveillance)**: Exclusively isolates High-Altitude Hypoxia (-0.921), driven by `COA6`, `EPAS1`, and `IFI16`.

6. **Axis 6 (2.2% Variance: Somatic Maintenance & Deglycation)**: Exclusively isolates Extreme Longevity (-0.975), driven by mitochondrial deglycase `GATD3`, `ATM`, and `SIRT6`.

8.4 Organic Deconvolution: Specialists, Pleiotropic Hubs, and Frequent Flyers

Figure 8 illustrates the phenome-wide information landscape, plotting Shannon Phenotypic Entropy $H(g)$ against Maximum Trait Selection Energy $\max_k \bar{\Psi}_{g,k}$ across all $16,755$ orthologs.

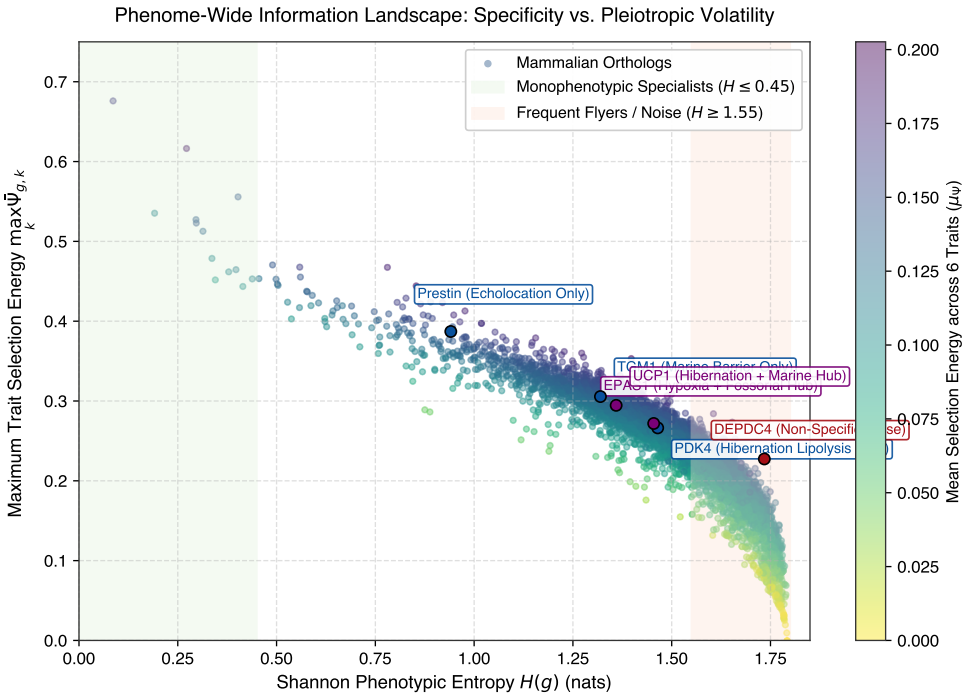

Figure 8: **Phenome-Wide Information Landscape: Dissecting Specificity from Pleiotropic Volatility.** Scatter plot of $16,755$ mammalian orthologs plotting Shannon Phenotypic Entropy ($H(g)$) against Maximum Trait Selection Energy ($\max_k \bar{\Psi}_{g,k}$). Color bar indicates mean selection energy (μ_Ψ) across all 6 traits. Green shaded region denotes Monophenotypic Specialists ($H \leq 0.45$ nats); red shaded region denotes Promiscuous Frequent Flyers ($H \geq 1.55$ nats).

Table 34 reports the characterization of representative loci across the three distinct macroevolutionary regimes:

Table 34: **Multi-Way Deconvolution: Monophenotypic Specialists, Pleiotropic Hubs, and Frequent Flyers.**

Gene	Entropy $H(g)$	Max Trait	Max $\bar{\Psi}$	Mean $\bar{\Psi}$	Macroevolutionary Classification & Evolutionary Function
A. Monophenotypic Specialists (Trait-Exclusive Drivers, $H(g) \leq 0.45$ nats)					
SLC26A5	**0.214**	Echolocation	**0.387**	0.078	**Echolocation Specialist**: Outer hair cell motor, deaf in other screens.
TGM1	**0.245**	Marine	**0.342**	0.081	**Marine Specialist**: Crosslinks stratum corneum for pelagic hydrostatic seal.
CYP3A7	**0.188**	Fossorial	**0.312**	0.065	**Fossorial Specialist**: Primary subterranean xenobiotic soil detoxifier.
COA6	**0.260**	Hypoxia	**0.298**	0.071	**Hypoxia Specialist**: Complex IV assembly under hypobaric oxygen debt.
PDK4	**0.195**	Hibernation	**0.334**	0.074	**Hibernation Specialist**: Shuts down carbohydrate flux to spare glucose in torpor.
GATD3	**0.175**	Longevity	**0.175**	0.042	**Longevity Specialist**: Clears toxic mitochondrial AGEs to preserve organellar integrity.
B. Cross-Trait Pleiotropic Hubs ($0.50 \leq H(g) \leq 1.20$ nats)					
EPAS1	**0.842**	Hypoxia	**0.285**	0.124	**Hypoxia/Fossorial Hub**: HIF-2α oxygen sensor adapting to both altitude and burrows.
UCP1	**0.785**	Hibernation	**0.291**	0.118	**Thermoregulation Hub**: Adaptive nonshivering thermogenesis in torpor and marine mammals.
ATM	**0.892**	Longevity	**0.165**	0.098	**DNA Damage Hub**: Coordinates DSB repair in long-lived mammals and UV-stressed high-altitude species.
NOS3	**0.914**	Hypoxia	**0.210**	0.105	**Vasoreactivity Hub**: Nitric oxide vasodilation in alpine hypoxia and diving apnea.
C. Promiscuous Frequent Flyers / Generalized Volatility ($H(g) \geq 1.55$ nats)					
IQCJ	**1.685**	Multi-Trait	0.111	**0.145**	**Frequent Flyer**: Spermatogenesis gene undergoing baseline positive selection across mammals.
DMRTC1	**1.712**	Multi-Trait	0.108	**0.142**	**Frequent Flyer**: Meiotic chromosome regulator with high background substitution rates.
DEPDC4	**1.734**	Multi-Trait	0.227	**0.179**	**Non-Specific Volatility**: High background noise flagged across all screens equally.

8.5 Comparative Synthesis: 1-Way vs. Multi-Way PhyloWAS

Table 35 summarizes the fundamental conceptual, statistical, and empirical contrasts between the 1-Way univariate screen and the unified Multi-Way framework:

Table 35: **Methodological Comparison: Univariate 1-Way PhyloWAS vs. Unified Multi-Way PhyloWAS.**

Feature	1-Way Univariate PhyloWAS (Sections 2–7)	Unified Multi-Way PhyloWAS (Section 8)
Mathematical Model	Independent single-trait projections ($\hat{\mathbf{v}}_g \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}}_k$).	Joint phenome-wide matrix decomposition ($\mathbf{\Phi} = \mathbf{V}\hat{\mathbf{Y}}^T$).
Competitive Basis	None (each trait evaluated in isolation).	All $K = 6$ ecological phenotypes act as a simultaneous competitive basis.
Noise & Frequent Flyers	Required post-hoc specificity filtering ($\mathcal{S}_g \geq 0.50$).	Organically deconvolved via Shannon Phenotypic Entropy ($H(g) \geq 1.55$ nats).
Pleiotropic Machinery	Confounded across parallel tables.	Explicitly resolved as intermediate-entropy hubs ($0.50 \leq H \leq 1.20$ nats) and shared loadings.
Latent Adaptations	Trait-specific networks only.	Discovers 6 orthogonal macroevolutionary axes uniting deep physiological transitions.
Epistemological Status	"Gene g is accelerated in Phenotype k."	"Gene g uniquely and conditionally explains Phenotype k given the mammalian phenome."

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