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The Genome 10K Project: A Way Forward

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Abstract

The Genome 10K Project was established in 2009 by a consortium of biologists and genome scientists determined to facilitate the sequencing and analysis of the complete genomes of 10,000 vertebrate species. Since then the number of selected and initiated species has risen from ~26 to 277 sequenced or ongoing with funding, an approximately tenfold increase in five years. Here we summarize the advances and commitments that have occurred by mid-2014 and outline the achievements and present challenges of reaching the 10,000-species goal. We summarize the status of known vertebrate genome projects, recommend standards for pronouncing a genome as sequenced or completed, and provide our present and future vision of the landscape of Genome 10K. The endeavor is ambitious, bold, expensive, and uncertain, but together the Genome 10K Consortium of Scientists and the worldwide genomics community are moving toward their goal of delivering to the coming generation the gift of genome empowerment for many vertebrate species.

Keywords

mammal; amphibian; reptile; bird; fish; genome

INTRODUCTION

The advent of low-cost, high-throughput sequencing has ushered in a new age of genome science and has forever changed the landscape of biological research. Projects that could only be dreamt of 10 years ago are now becoming a reality. The Genome 10K Project (hereafter the G10K Project) is one such project (1–3). Sequencing 10,000 vertebrate genomes is an ambitious and worthy goal that will provide a foundation for diverse research and exciting discovery for decades to come. We originally selected a goal of 10,000 species

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The Annual Review of Animal Biosciences is online at animal.annualreviews.org

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(from a total of over 62,000 named vertebrate species) (Figure 1) as a round number target that was achievable, and which includes nearly every species with even modest biological knowledge available plus several thousand species without much knowledge. A detailed description of the rationale is presented in the original G10K White paper (1).

The G10K Project was founded in 2009 by bringing together biologists, bioinformaticians, and computational scientists to accumulate and organize specimens, to develop standards for genome assembly and annotation, and to facilitate the release and use of the genome data created through the project. At the first G10K workshop in Santa Cruz, California (April 13– 16, 2009), biologists who curated museum or personal frozen collections of biospecimens were convened and asked to develop a list of vertebrate specimens available in collections globally, which then would become the basis of the G10K Project. Amazingly, the group found that 16,203 vertebrate species had already been collected and were housed in existing collections. These were collated into a database [\(http://genome10k.soe.ucsc.edu\)](http://genome10k.soe.ucsc.edu) that became the foundation for developing initial plans for whole genome sequencing (WGS) (1).

Since 2009, the G10K Project has grown in membership, in responsibilities, in recognition, and in stewardship. At the most recent G10K workshop (April 24–28, 2013) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, over 150 scientists gathered to develop plans for future genome sequencing and discuss analytical and computational challenges and the exciting results from the first ~270 vertebrate genomes sequenced to date. Here, we provide an overview of the goals, responsibilities, accomplishments, and insights of the G10K Project, where the project stands today with regard to the vertebrate genomes that have been sequenced thus far, and the remaining challenges involved in reaching the goal of sequencing 10,000 vertebrate genomes.

GENOME 10K RESPONSIBILITIES

The G10K Community of Scientists (G10KCOS) established six primary goals or responsibilities to drive the project forward (Table 1). Our first charge was to accumulate biospecimens that would provide the DNA necessary to develop reference-quality genomes. The 2009 G10K meeting identified over 16,000 species from existing collections in museums, universities, and zoos around the world and cataloged that inventory in an openaccess database accessible to the entire community ([https://genome10k.soe.ucsc.edu/](https://genome10k.soe.ucsc.edu/biospecimen_database) [biospecimen_database\)](https://genome10k.soe.ucsc.edu/biospecimen_database). Samples included in this virtual repository ranged from extracted genomic DNA to frozen tissues to cell lines. In addition to compiling this virtual list, we produced an in-depth report of best practices for obtaining and storing vertebrate biospecimens for WGS (4).

A second goal of the G10K Project is to foster the development of research communities centered either around the genomes of species or species groups (e.g., birds) or around bioinformatics themes, namely genome assembly, annotation, alignment, and comparative analyses. Such communities are vital because not only do they help establish criteria for the selection of species to be sequenced but they also ensure interdisciplinary collaboration among scientists with diverse research experiences. For example, whereas one scientist may

intend to use a reference genome to analyze genome architecture, another may use the same data to search for evidence of positive selection. Thus, an open-access genome becomes a commodity that drives multifaceted research programs in different fields. Within the G10K Project, communities of scientists are broadly organized around the major classes of vertebrates (fishes, amphibians, nonavian reptiles, birds, and mammals), and these communities strive to identify target species for genome sequencing that benefit the largest group of scientists and fill major genome sampling gaps across the vertebrate tree of life.

A third goal of the G10K Project is to develop a strong and scientifically vetted set of standards concerning specimen selection, DNA preparation, genome assembly, genome feature annotation, whole genome alignment, comparative analyses, and data release. Despite the tremendous progress that has been made in genomics, the field itself is still in an experimental state with no established best practices in the generation and analysis of genome data. Various genomic groups develop their own ideas about sample quality and quantity for de novo sequencing as well as about what constitutes a high-coverage genome. They often use home-brew or unvetted software, even though several groups have established that software programs developed for assembly, annotation, and alignment differ markedly in accuracy and efficiency (5–8). G10K scientists aim to develop a set of consensus-based best practices regarding genomic data generation and analysis. For example, given a shark, frog, or microbat, which tissue(s) would be most useful in producing genomic libraries? How should these biospecimens be preserved? How is DNA derived from them handled? Which sequencing libraries should be prepared? Given the choice of among 20+ genome assembly algorithms and programs, which one produces the most accurate assembly, and what parameters are best for evaluating this? The G10KCOS is developing informed guidelines in addressing issues such as these through collaborations between biologists and bioinformaticians. A preliminary snapshot of G10K endorsed standards is presented in the sidebar, Draft Standards for Genome 10K.

A fourth responsibility for the G10KCOS is to record the progress of vertebrate WGS by maintaining a database of completed and ongoing projects being carried out by genome sequencing centers and by independent research laboratories around the world ([http://](http://genome10k.soe.ucsc.edu/species) genome10k.soe.ucsc.edu/species). By doing this, we not only avoid duplication of efforts, given the still relatively high expense of generating and annotating reference-quality genomes, but also help to target the species that will maximize research dividends and increase breadth of phylogenetic coverage in the vertebrate tree of life (9). Table 2 presents a list of 164 vertebrate species with a published genome sequence, and Table 3 lists an additional 113 vertebrate species for which genome sequencing is accomplished or near completion.

The fifth goal of the G10K Project, raising funds, is an evolving exercise. The G10K Project was initially predicated on the expectation that the costs associated with genome sequencing would decrease rapidly, making it relatively affordable to sequence vertebrate genomes with size scales similar to the human genome (10–12). However, even as sequencing costs decline, the cost of data processing and bioinformatic analysis remains substantive. The G10KCOS is addressing this challenge by fostering training workshops that empower computer-savvy students in analysis of genome data (see below for these bioinformatics

challenges). The G10KCOS endorses research development grants and proposals that facilitate local funding of genome projects and encourage investigator-initiated fund development from government, corporate, and entrepreneurial resources. G10K has signed memorandums of understanding with large sequencing centers, such as BGI-Shenzhen and the Broad Institute, to work together to increase the quality and quantity of vertebrate genome sequencing endeavors. For example, in 2010 BGI-Shenzhen agreed to sequence and fund the first \sim 1% (105 species) of vertebrate genomes in close collaboration with the G10KCOS. At this writing, whole genome sequences have been completed for 70% of these species, and of these, 43 have been published (Tables 2 and 3).

Initial publication of a genome sequencing project frequently generates additional funding, particularly when the published genome of a species stirs excitement and enthusiasm in the public imagination. Whether it is the genome of the giant panda (13), with its revelations about the genetics of its ability to digest bamboo; the elephant shark (14), as a model for the evolution of the vertebrate body plan; or the minke whale (15), providing a glimpse into the adaptations associated with becoming aquatic, many of the opportunities we already have with today's sequencing technology are too enticing to pass up while waiting for technology to improve.

Lastly, the G10K Project has spread across biology to inspire similar large community initiatives to sequence the genomes of nonvertebrate species (our sixth goal), including insects (i5K), noninsect marine invertebrates (GIGA), plants (NSF Plant Genome Research Program), fungi (1000 Fungal Genomes Project), and microbes (100K Foodborne Pathogen Genome Project) (see Table 1).

BIOINFORMATICS CHALLENGES TO WHOLE GENOME SEQUENCE ANALYSES

The G10KCOS is presently working to identify and prioritize the next set of vertebrate species for genome sequencing (e.g., Reference 16). This process relies on insights from the bioinformaticians who will lead the assembly and analysis of the sequence data (17, 18). A critical first step in genome assembly is to determine what sequence data will be most useful to maximize the potential for de novo and reference-guided genome assembly. Large-insert genomic libraries, long sequence reads, and physical map–based technologies are crucial in assembling longer contiguous sequence fragments. High-quality (undegraded) DNAs in high-microgram quantities are required. Better methods for de novo genome sequencing from smaller (nanogram) amounts of DNA will make sample collection easier for many additional smaller species. Another important consideration for genome assembly is the size and repeat content of the target genome. Larger and more repetitive genomes will be more costly to sequence and assemble. Complex and abundant repeat families present in many species confound genome assembly, especially if the repeating units are long and highly similar to one another. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to determine the repeat content of a genome until some preliminary sequence sampling has been performed.

Another key bioinformatics challenge is sequence heterozygosity and its disposition across the genome. Available assembly algorithms erect a haploid reference genome by merging

the information from the two parental genome sequences, often making arbitrary phase assignments, frequently producing chimeric contigs and scaffolds. A highly heterozygous individual can make assembly inaccurate or impossible. This can be assuaged by selecting highly inbred or haploid individuals, but these are unavailable for most species. Abundant segmental duplications, which may appear as additional haplotypes, add to the problem. These may be polymorphic, and hence heterozygous as well. Mixtures of DNA from multiple individuals, undertaken to obtain sufficient input DNA for some sequencing libraries, create an additional layer of complexity.

Given the current challenges in assembling a large (>3 -Gbp), repeat-rich genome with a high level of heterozygosity, many such genome projects are being deferred until the future. Even for typical vertebrate genomes, there is constant awareness that the longer one waits to sequence one's favorite genome, the cheaper and higher quality it will become. Species for which genomic sequences were generated and assembled relatively early in the large-scale comparative genomics era can be of lower quality, with inaccurate assemblies, missed paralogs, and chimeric chromosomal segments [see, for example, the platypus (19) and giant panda (13) genomes; 20]. Assemblies for certain species that were first to be sequenced (e.g., chicken, chimpanzee) have been validated and improved using complementary mapping and assembly approaches, but they are expensive and time consuming. Prioritizing species for sequencing is a complex process that must balance the needs of individual communities, the overall G10K effort, funding constraints, and emerging technologies.

EVALUATING GENOME ASSEMBLIES

The initial step in making a genome useful to the biological community that studies a species is to produce an assembly of the millions of short DNA reads obtained from nextgeneration sequencing technology into an ordered and oriented sequence of contigs that resembles the order in which the assembled sequence actually occurs on each chromosome (see References 20–22). Genome assembly begins with homology match detection of reads to build short contigs. Contigs are then joined with mate pair end reads to form scaffolds, which within ideal assemblies span millions of base pairs. The process is completed when scaffolds are assembled into chromosomes using independent physical framework maps. The G10KCOS has evaluated a dozen or more available computational assembly tools, termed assemblers, which have been developed to accomplish this process in the Assemblathon competitions (7, 8). The challenges are detecting and correcting assembly mistakes caused by repeat sequence families, by copy number variation of certain DNA stretches, and by single-nucleotide variants (SNPs), the stuff of evolution and the scourge of a basic assembler (e.g., Reference 21). Assemblathon competitions first compared different assembly tools using a simulated vertebrate genome (7) and then three genome sequences from a cichlid fish, a parakeet, and a snake (8). The Genome Assembly Gold-standard Evaluation consortium and study further evaluated assembly quality of genomes across a broad array of species (5).

Lessons learned from the Assemblathons and other evaluations have led to the development of new assemblers. DISCOVAR de novo ([http://www.broadinstitute.org/software/discovar/](http://www.broadinstitute.org/software/discovar/blog/) [blog/;](http://www.broadinstitute.org/software/discovar/blog/) 23) is a new assembler developed at the Broad Institute that avoids the need for

polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and in fact requires PCR-free libraries. This leads to improvements because compositional biases present in PCR-based approaches confound assemblers by generating nonuniform read depth. Although DISCOVAR is currently being

To evaluate assembly quality, new metrics have also been developed beyond N50 (the smallest length N such that at least 50% of the bases in the assembly are in contigs of that length or greater). Probabilistic measures based on likelihood statistics have been used and shown to provide more accurate and objective evaluations of assembly quality, independent of a reference genome (24–26). For example, the program CGAL uses the uniformity of genome coverage to evaluate the likelihood of assembly quality while simultaneously taking into account sequencing errors, insert size distribution, and extent of unassembled data (26). When CGAL was applied to the Assemblathon 1 data set, assemblies with a higher extent of coverage tended to be more accurate. These methods allow researchers to optimize parameters associated with assembly programs to obtain better-quality assemblies (with higher likelihood values) and are likely to become standard tools in obtaining high-quality assemblies (25).

used for resequencing projects, its real promise may be to assemble de novo genomes.

A major finding of the Assemblathon studies is that there is considerable variation among output assemblies. Users cannot simply merge the outputs of many assemblers to arrive at an optimal consensus assembly. One assembly program, Metassembler (M. Schatz, unpublished data; [http://schatzlab.cshl.edu/presentations/2011-11-03.Genome%20Informatics.pdf\)](http://schatzlab.cshl.edu/presentations/2011-11-03.Genome%20Informatics.pdf), actually does this, but its accuracy is no better than its best constituents. Assembly is a complex problem with many trade-offs, and there are no easy solutions (25). Has genome assembly with short reads reached a point of diminishing returns? At the G10K 2013 workshop, we learned that though many algorithms are still in development, accuracy is not substantially improved when only short reads are available, suggesting new sequencing approaches are needed to make the next quantum leap.

Large-Insert Sequencing Methods

New methods that improve the outlook for de novo genome assembly by sequencing large inserts with distinctly barcoded short reads are on the horizon. Protocols based on sequencing fosmid pools (~30 kb/fosmid) have gotten less expensive while still achieving long-range order and orientation of contigs (27, 28) (Table 4). Illumina-Moleculo technology, at approximately 10 kb per independently barcoded insert, provides similar benefits at lower cost. Its cost and overall feasibility for G10K have not been well established, though several groups have recently used Illumina-Moleculo reads to haplotype the human genome, with promising results (29).

Table 4 lists promising new long-read technologies, although each of these is as yet unproven for very large-scale $(\sim 3$ -Gbp) genome assembly. The single-molecule, real-time sequencing technology (SMRT) manufactured by Pacific Biosciences (PacBio) has been available for several years, but its higher relative cost and higher basic error rate have restricted its use to microbial genomes and eukaryote transcriptomes (30, 31). However, ongoing improvements in SMRT sequencing are beginning to ameliorate these concerns (32), and high-quality assemblies can often be obtained through hybrid approaches in which

assemblies are generated using both short reads (e.g., Illumina) and long reads (e.g., PacBio) (33). Oxford Nanopore long reads have evoked considerable hopefulness as genome scientists are piloting genome assembly for accuracy, feasibility, and cost effectiveness. As various long-read technologies improve and their prices fall, it is likely that they will become part of typical genome assembly efforts.

Mapping Methods to Assist in Assembly

Mapping methods can also be used to improve assembly. Richard Durbin from the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute proposed at the 2013 G10K meeting the sequencing of trios (mother, father, child) to improve genome assembly through a direct haplotype-phase resolved linkage map (280). Using SNP variation as an information source in assembly is a unique and potentially powerful new strategy that would anchor scaffolds to an ad hoc haplotype map. However, this approach does require additional sequencing. These techniques are an addition to single-sperm genome amplification (producing individual genome-wide haplotypes as well as whole genome assemblies) and other sequencing approaches that in theory can build a recombination and/or physical map using bioinformatics analysis (34–36).

Framework physical maps have been a mainstay for anchoring genome assemblies of model species (human, mouse, rat, dog, cat, and others) (20). However, linkage and radiation hybrid physical maps for these genome projects are rather expensive for wider-scale use. Optical mapping, a relatively new tool for building an independent physical map to anchor assembled scaffolds of sequenced genomes (e.g., Reference 37), was evaluated favorably in Assemblathon 2 (8). Map-generating technologies pioneered by BioNano Genomics, the Irys System, use rare-cut genomic DNA subjected to electrophoretic current to produce physical maps as well (38, 39). Physical or optical mapping methods can be used to improve graph navigation (40), to validate chromosomal ordering of contigs, and to detect and break up chimeric contigs. Random fosmid sequencing was also used as a kind of physical map for evaluation in Assemblathon 2. Although laborious and expensive, clone-based sequencing has the advantage of reduced size and no sequence heterozygosity. Genome assemblers can benefit from transcriptome information (41) to guide their algorithms as well as from comparative syntenic similarity employed by the Reference-Assisted Chromosome Assembly algorithm (42). These avenues of research must be explored more thoroughly as genome alignment and comparative genome analyses become more central to the G10K Project.

GENOME ANNOTATION

Genome annotation encompasses the description of a variety of elements that can be identified in a species' genome, from protein-coding regions and intervening noncoding sequence to repeat families, noncoding RNAs, regulatory motifs, and specific elements (Table 5). For identification of protein-coding genes, transcriptome information via RNAseq data is invaluable before, during, and after a genome has been assembled (6). Noncoding RNA genes, such as structural RNAs, microRNAs, and long noncoding RNAs, are also identified by RNA-seq in conjunction with bioinformatics sequence analysis and play key

roles in the cell (e.g., Reference 43). One of the main reasons to sequence a genome is to investigate its genes, and RNA-seq can provide some of this information at a fraction of the cost of a whole genome assembly. Flanking the genes, one finds a variety of regulatory elements, some of which are highly conserved between species and hence recognized from sequence, whereas others are more rapidly evolving and require experimental assays involving chromatin immunoprecipitation followed by sequencing (ChIP-seq) or DNase I hypersensitive site sequencing.

Available software programs for discerning genes and other features (Table 5) have been employed to unravel the secrets of new genomes on a regular basis. There are no precise best practices for gene selection, SNP discovery, or repeat annotation, although it has been shown that consistency may be low across different algorithms and methods [e.g., SNP calling (44) or reconstruction from RNA-seq data (45)]. The G10KCOS is considering an annotationcollaborative exercise (such as the Assemblathons and the Alignathon) to develop more explicit guidelines for vertebrate genome annotation.

GENOME ALIGNMENT

A comparative genomics approach between related species is fundamental to the identification and analysis of genes, their regulatory elements, and their adaptive natural history (6, 46–48). As such, comparative analyses of homologous genes in a syntenic context among related well-annotated species is a mainstay of annotation pipelines (49, 50). Such analysis depends heavily upon accurate multiple genome alignments. Exceptions to gene sequence conservation can indicate evolutionary gene changes, chromosome rearrangements, gene family expansion or contraction, and SNP-based signatures of historic selection. Discerning these genome modifications allows critical insights into the events occurring over the course of speciation and divergence of taxa. But comparative analysis of genomes from distantly related species is not simple, rather akin to comparing the assembly blueprints of a Boeing 747 to a Mercedes-Benz sedan, to a Yamaha motor scooter, and to a tricycle. A first step is to design an efficient strategy for aligning the entire gigabase-long genomes of related species.

Genome alignment, the task of aligning all the homologous nucleotides in a set of complete genomes, including those in noncoding regions, is critical if we are to establish the genetic relationships and, by extension, evolutionary history of our shared vertebrate ancestry. Genome alignment can be thought of as a generalized form of the DNA alignment problem, in that all other (classical) forms of alignment are a subclass of this general problem. The Alignathon competition invited participants to submit solutions to constructed or collected data sets (51). Three independent data sets, two simulated from primates and mammals and one a set of 20 Drosophila genomes, were offered for trial of various alignment algorithms. All the data sets involved genomes of approximately 200 Mbp in length, a decision made to create a meaningful challenge that was nonetheless accessible to the broadest possible range of tools. In all, 35 different analytical solutions were submitted by 10 teams using 12 distinct alignment pipelines (51).

Several important conclusions were reached through the Alignathon competition. First, relatively few groups and very few tools are currently capable of making precise genome alignments even at the scale of the 20-Drosophila-genome data set. For example, 11 of the 35 submitted alignments were computed using variants of the Multiz alignment pipeline (52), which is now over ten years old. Second, many current genome alignment tools have noticeable limitations. In particular, many of the entries were reference-based (genomes aligned to a reference genome as a key step), which produced a noticeable bias in the quality of alignments between nonreference genomes. Notably, only two of the alignment teams attempted to align multiple paralogous sequences. Third, there are few broad metrics for assessing genome alignments of real genomes that can be used to assess the quality of the alignment across the genome, and which do not rely on expert biological information (e.g., the location of annotations), and even fewer that have robust implementations. Fourth, consistent results were found between the simulation study and metrics for assessing the real alignments (53). Lastly, there exists tremendous variability in performance between alignment programs, though there is much less variance when aligning closely related organisms. With increasing evolutionary distance between compared species, all the various whole genome alignment tools get progressively less reliable.

The Alignathon was successful in revealing both the strengths and weaknesses of available whole genome alignment tools, but there remain several important directions for future work that, when pursued, will provide valuable information for the G10K and eukaryotic genomics community as a whole. A proposed second Alignathon competition in the future would address the following topics:

- **1.** the impact of assembly errors on alignment. Addressing this would ideally be an integrative analysis with the Assemblathon group.
- **2.** scaling to larger genome sizes with greater complexity and more repeats; i.e., evaluating and comparing results of full-size vertebrate genome alignments.
- **3.** a comparison of methods for the alignment of genes within genome alignments.
- **4.** the accuracy of cross-validation methods; one way to assess genome alignments is to set aside the sequence of a target genome and then assess how closely an imputed ancestral genome based upon a genome alignment of the other genomes matches the target genome. Such approaches have been used previously (52, 54) but never for complete genomes and genome alignments.

Computing genome alignments is computationally intense and requires several thousand CPU hours per genome. One of the main problems encountered in the first Alignathon was the lack of groups with sufficient computational power to compete. This is a critical problem that must be addressed by the development of more efficient methods, coupled to an increased commitment to provisioning more powerful computer resources for multiple alignments.

PROGRESS AND FUTURE PLANS FOR WHOLE GENOME SEQUENCING OF 10,000 SPECIES

In the five years since Genome 10K was proposed, the genomes of 277 vertebrate species have been proposed, funded, accomplished at some level, and released; of these, the genomes of 164 species have been reviewed and published (Tables 2 and 3). These achievements reflect efforts from larger sequencing centers, independent projects from individual teams, the BGI-G10K collaboration, and other G10KCOS initiatives, altogether a remarkable accomplishment. An additional 200+ species are named on websites of sequencing centers (BGI, the Broad Institute, the Baylor College of Medicine Human Genome Sequencing Center, The Genome Institute at Washington University, and others) as pending, with a substantial degree of uncertainty about their timetable for completion. The initial G10KCOS selection of species has been discussed (1), and a wealth of vertebrate evolutionary genomic diversity is beginning to be produced. Next, we summarize the challenges, accomplishments, and insights of G10K to date regarding the five principal taxonomic classes of vertebrates (Figure 1).

FISHES

More than half of all vertebrate species are fishes, which include the jawless (Agnatha), cartilaginous (Chondrichthyes), lobe-fin (Sarcopterygii), and ray-fin (Actinopterygii) fishes, with the latter group being the most diverse in number of species (Figure 2). The first nonhuman vertebrate genomes to be sequenced were those of the teleost fishes, a group that contains many species with genomes that are unusually small in size and therefore amenable to whole genome shotgun sequencing (e.g., fugu, *Takifugu rubripes*; 55, 56). Since then, a draft genome sequence from another pufferfish species, Tetraodon nigroviridis, has been produced (57), along with the genomes of the medaka (Oryzias latipes), three-spined stickleback (Gasterosteus aculeatus), zebrafish (Danio rerio), and platyfish (Xiphophorus maculatus), all of which serve as important model organisms for studies of gene function in development and adaptive evolution (58–61). Annotation of the zebrafish genome revealed over 26,000 protein-coding genes as well as the highest number of species-specific genes yet found for any vertebrate species whole genome sequenced to date. This large gene number is likely due to the whole genome duplication event that occurred early in the history of teleost fishes, resulting in the formation of numerous functional gene duplicates (60). Since these earlier studies, the number of fish WGS projects, both published and ongoing, has increased dramatically, providing many key insights related to physiological adaptations and vertebrate evolution (62, 63).

Given the breadth of vertebrate species diversity represented by the fishes, the majority of species planned to be de novo sequenced by the G10K Project will be fishes, particularly the teleosts (see Reference 16). As a first step toward that goal, 30 of the first 105 species to be selected for WGS through the collaborative efforts of BGI and G10K are fishes, including one cartilaginous fish, the elasmobranch great hammerhead shark (Sphyrna mokarran); two representatives of the early-branching Chondrostei; and 27 species of teleost fishes that encompass 12 orders. At this writing, the genomes of 24 fish species are published and 47

others are near completion (Tables 2 and 3). In anticipation of future genome sequencing efforts, the G10K fish community has identified a global list of 100 fish species that were nominated as gold standards, in that besides WGS, transcriptomes and stable cell lines will be generated for these species (16).

AMPHIBIANS

Amphibians comprise approximately 11% of vertebrate species. New taxa are described and reported for this group every year, implying that total amphibian biodiversity may be greatly underestimated (64). Among 7,300 named amphibian species, we currently have whole genome sequences available for only two species, both being anurans and from the same genus, the western clawed frog [Xenopus (Silurana) tropicalis] and the African clawed frog [Xenopus (Silurana) laevis] (Tables 2 and 3) (65; see also<http://www.xenbase.org/entry/>). Genome size is extremely variable within amphibians, varying by as much as \sim 130-fold (66, 67). Further, amphibians harbor some of the largest genomes, which has significantly hampered progress in the sequencing of additional amphibian genomes. The largest tetrapod genomes are found within the salamanders (Caudata), with sizes ranging from \sim 14 to \sim 120 Gb (68). Preliminary genomic scans of several salamander taxa indicate that large genome size may be related to the extensive proliferation of long terminal repeat retrotransposons (69). Such large genomes increase the cost of collecting raw data (many more libraries are needed to achieve adequate coverage) and increase the computational complexity of the assembly and analysis of those data. Additionally, the small physical size of most amphibians limits the amount of tissue that is available for making large-insert mate-pair libraries.

Despite the challenges and high costs of obtaining a diversity of amphibian genomes, there are reasons that these costs may be justifiable to some extent, considering how underrepresented this important group is currently among the list of completed vertebrate genomes (Table 2). Future developments in assembly strategies, especially the use of long reads discussed above (Table 4), may enable large genomes to be assembled more readily. Given the remarkable and unique adaptations developed in this vertebrate class, the complete absence of an understanding of the diversity of amphibian genome structure, content, and evolution poses a major gap in our knowledge of living vertebrates (66).

Among the first 105 species nominated for WGS through the BGI-G10K collaborative effort, nine amphibians were chosen to represent a broad level of divergence across the (mostly) anuran tree of life (Table 3). Species targeted for WGS include the coastal tailed frog (Ascaphus truei), a member of the Archaeobatrachia, which includes species showing primitive characteristics not found in other anurans and therefore represents a key lineage in the anuran tree of life. Also included is a member of the amphibian order Gymnophiona (caecilians), represented by the Banna caecilian (Ichthyophis bannanicus). At present, sequencing has been completed for the Tibetan frog (Nanorana parkeri), now in the draft assembly stage. At least one other independent anuran genome project is under way, that of the cane toad (Rhinella marina), a species originally found in Central and South America but later introduced into Hawaii, Australia, and parts of Oceania, where it has become an invasive (70). This species is also in the assembly stage.

WGS has also begun on well-studied frog species with relatively small genome sizes, such as the túngara frog (Physalaemus pustulosus), important in studies of sexual selection (71); the coqui frog (Eleutherodactylus coqui), important in studies of the evolution of direct development (72); and the plains spadefoot toad (Spea bombifrons), important in studies of speciation and adaptive hybridization (73). An additional small-genome species, the eastern banjo frog from Australia (Limnodynastes dumerilii), provides phylogenetic breadth. BGI-G10K is also taking on one large-genome species, the strawberry dart-poison frog (*Oophaga* pumilio), important for studies of rapid phenotypic evolution under natural and sexual selection (74). WGS data collection should begin soon on the last of the nine amphibian G10K species, including the horned marsupial frog (Gastrotheca cornuta), with its unusual reproductive biology and high conservation concern (75).

Looking toward the future, we see three main priorities for sequencing the genomes of additional amphibian species. First, a high-quality assembly should be provided from at least one member of each of the three extant amphibian orders (Anura, Caudata, and Gymnophiona). The BGI-G10K-selected amphibian species will meet two-thirds of this goal with sequencing the genomes of nine Anura and one Gymnophiona species (Table 3). As for Caudata, independent efforts are currently under way to sequence and assemble the genome of the Mexican axolotl (Ambystoma mexicanum), an important model organism used for research in a variety of fields, including embryogenesis, regenerative biology and medicine, neurology, and sensory biology (see <http://www.ambystoma.org/>). Amphibians are the sister group to amniotes, and complete genomes from representatives of all three amphibian orders could therefore provide new information about the characteristics of the amniote ancestral genome and how vertebrate lineages have diverged since this ancestor (76).

The second priority would expand WGS and annotation to incorporate species with smallersized genomes. Because a reference genome assembly is paramount to genome analyses, frog species with small genomes remain high-priority targets for platinum genome sequencing projects today (see sidebar, Draft Standards for Genome 10K). Furthermore, the availability of high-quality RNA samples for transcriptome sequencing from frozen viable cell cultures opens new opportunities for assisting the advancement of amphibian genomics.

A third priority would target species pairs or larger groups that allow genomic analysis of one of the many biological phenomena that are prominent in amphibian evolution. These include species that produce medically important skin toxins and antimicrobial peptides (77). Genomic data may also be important to many conservation interventions in amphibians and to understanding susceptibility and resistance to chytrid fungal infection and decline, e.g., of Atelopus and Lithobates (78, 79). Finally, the next round of amphibian genome sequencing will certainly need to greatly increase phylogenetic coverage of the amphibian tree of life to facilitate comparative genomic analyses, and in so doing will hopefully provide greater geographical representation as well.

NONAVIAN REPTILES

Living "reptiles" comprise three main lineages: (*a*) turtles (Testudines); (*b*) tuatara, lizards, and snakes (Lepidosauria); and (c) alligators and crocodiles (Crocodylia). Reptiles are an

ancient group, which is reflected in their extensive diversity; for example, the divergence among major squamate groups (e.g., snakes and lizards) is similar in magnitude to that between humans and kangaroos $(\sim 175 \text{ My})$ (80). This diversity manifests across many traits, reflected in appreciable genetic and morphological innovation across reptilian lineages. For example, across reptile species there exists a broad range of life history traits related to reproduction and sex determination. Among the most remarkable are repeated transitions across the phylogeny between environmental and genotypic sex determination (81). Furthermore, species with genotypic sex determination can have sex chromosome systems with either female (ZZ/ZW) or male (XX/XY) heterogamety. These sex chromosomes, and presumably the sex-determining genes they contain, are not conserved across lineages even though the basic syntenic blocks making up the karyotype are conserved (reviewed in Reference 82). Reptiles are therefore excellent models for the study of evolution of sex determination, and of sex chromosomes. Annotation, mapping, and comparison of whole genome sequences from both sexes are invaluable tools for understanding the evolutionary processes governing sex determination (83) and promise to identify, for the first time, a sexdetermining gene in a reptile. Squamates (lizards and snakes) are also the only vertebrate group to have true parthenogenesis, or asexual reproduction without any input (genetic or otherwise) from males (84). They are thus excellent systems to investigate the consequences of asexuality in amniotes on a whole genome scale (85).

Despite the extreme variations in genomic content and characteristics present within reptiles (86), they have remained a relatively neglected target of large-scale genome sequencing efforts. A handful of recent nonavian reptile genome sequencing and assembly projects have been motivated by addressing phylogenetic questions and the genomic basis of specific biological questions. The first published nonavian reptile genome, that of the green anole lizard, Anolis carolinensis, revealed a nucleotide organization (isochores) unlike that of any other sequenced vertebrate to date (87–89). Since then, genomes for two snake species, the Burmese python (*Python molurus bivittatus*) and the king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*), have been published and indicate that snakes may have reevolved GC isochore structure (90–92). Analyses of snake genomes also suggest that the ancestral snake lineage experienced unprecedented levels of positive selection on protein-coding genes, that repeat element content varies widely across snakes, and that snake organ remodeling after feeding is associated with massive shifts in gene expression (90, 91). Draft genome sequences for four species of crocodilians, the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), the gharial (Gavialis gangeticus), the saltwater crocodile (Crocodylus porosus), and the Chinese alligator (*Alligator sinensis*), have been completed and published (93, 94). Together, these crocodilian genomes provide important insights into the ancestral genomes of archosaurs and amniotes and hold potential for understanding characteristics of dinosaur genomes (93). The sister phylogenetic relationship of turtles and archosaurs (birds and crocodiles) was recently affirmed with the complete genome sequence from the western painted turtle, Chrysemys picta (95), which also found that turtles have evolved at a remarkably slow rate at the molecular level. Crocodiles have an even slower rate (93). Thus, current reptilian genomics projects are largely motivated by the specific biological and evolutionary questions that their genomes can address, and ongoing or proposed projects continue to

develop among independent research groups or through research consortiums (e.g., the Consortium for Snake Genomics) (Table 1).

Eleven nonavian reptile species were nominated for de novo genome sequencing and assembly through the BGI-G10K collaboration (Tables 2 and 3). Draft assemblies have been completed for eight of these species, of which three have been published (94, 96). Among the species chosen is the tuatara, Sphenodon punctatus, the sole representative of the relictual lineage Rhyncocephalia, which is likely sister to the squamate reptiles. The rarity and significance of this species made obtaining samples for WGS a permitting challenge, and the relatively large genome size (-5 Gb) has also hampered efforts to obtain a reference genome at high coverage.

Other reptilian target species were chosen to address particular questions with regard to key biological characteristics. The Gila monster, Heloderma suspectum, is being sequenced to identify the genes involved in venom evolution (e.g., Reference 97). The Australian central bearded dragon lizard, Pogona vitticeps, is also being targeted because this species provides an ideal model to examine the genomic underpinnings of environmental and genetic sex determination. Gender in this lizard is usually determined by a pair of ZZ or ZW sex microchromosomes (98), but ZZ individuals can be reversed to the female phenotype at high temperatures (99). An annotated genome sequence for the dragon lizard P . vitticeps is currently available online ([https://genomics.canberra.edu.au\)](https://genomics.canberra.edu.au), and a partial physical map for this species is nearing completion. For two turtle species published, the green turtle (Chelonia mydas), a marine species, and the soft-shelled turtle (Pelodiscus sinensis) (96), genome sizes averaged about 2.2 Gb. Comparative genomic analyses indicated dramatic expansion in the olfactory receptor gene family in both species and the loss of several orthologous genes involved in normal development and energy homeostasis (96). Wholeembryo gene expression analysis of both turtle species showed global repatterning of gene regulation following the divergence between the turtle and chicken lineages through which the unique body plan of turtles may have evolved (96).

Future priorities for WGS of additional taxa of nonavian reptiles is collectively based on the number of interesting biological questions such genomes may address, the availability of samples, species having smaller genome sizes and low heterozygosity, and overall vertebrate genome diversity. Species selected for the next round of WGS have been prioritized to address such questions, including the following: (a) the evolution and molecular mechanisms underlying genetic and temperature-dependent sex determination; (b) molecular underpinnings of extreme morphological and molecular convergent evolution; (c) extreme phenotypes (e.g., horns, gliding in lizards, adhesive toe pads, projectile tongues); (d) responses of widely distributed species to past and present climate change; (e) evolution and persistence of parthenogenetic lineages, evolution of deadly venom toxins, and loss of limbs and sight; (*f*) evolution of viviparity; and (g) the evolutionary placement of debated lineages within the evolutionary tree of nonavian reptiles. Because there are several independent research groups producing moderate-quality genomes of reptiles, the G10KCOS is targeting species that could add value to these other genomes by providing a platinum reference genome of related species.

BIRDS

Modern birds trace their origins to the Jurassic epoch (over 150 Mya), when a theropod lineage of the widespread and successful reptilian dinosaurs spawned a group that would be the only survivors of the Cretaceous-Paleogene dinosaur extinction (~66 Mya) (100). Today, Aves represents the most specious class of terrestrial vertebrates, with some 10,500 bird species occupying a plethora of adaptive niches. One hypothesis is that Neoaves birds and placental mammals, comprising more than 95% of all living bird and mammal species, have captured the ecological niche opportunities that emerged from the cataclysm of the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction event 66 Mya, which led to the extinction of dinosaurs. An alternative hypothesis is that modern birds radiated 10–80 millions of years before that event (101, 102).

This detailed history, enriched by morphological, behavioral, molecular, and paleontological inference, has produced a fascinating vertebrate group that has informed evolutionary processes, neuroscience, developmental biology, and species conservation. Further, several domestic bird species have significant economic impact (chicken, turkey, ostrich, quail, and others), and many species have been introduced in the pet trade.

During recent decades, the avian systematics community has developed large repositories that house high-quality genetic samples of a substantial number of avian species. These collections provide an essential resource for genomic analyses of avian structural, functional, and behavioral diversity. With representation from 15 natural history collections distributed globally, the G10K biospecimen list (1) includes specimens from 100% of the 32 orders, 91% of the 230 families, 73% of the 2,172 genera, and approximately 50% of the 10,500 species of birds (Figure 3). Each order is represented in multiple biospecimen collections, as are all but 17 families and all but 585 genera, ensuring at least one sample of high quality.

Until recently, whole genome sequence assessment was limited to three species, the chicken (Gallus gallus), domestic turkey (Meleagris gallopavo), and zebra finch (Taeniopygia *guttata*) (103–105). Further, the phylogenetic relationships among many bird taxa were unresolved or controversial except for the most coarse-grained divergences (106–108). The smaller genome size of birds relative to other vertebrates (68) and reduced sequencing costs made it possible to expand WGS efforts into nonmodel species to expand our understanding of the structure and function of avian genomes (109).

The avian genomics community has achieved a seminal realization of the vision outlined by Genome 10K for comparative genomic analyses. With unparalleled collaborative interaction, a comprehensive multifactorial WGS approach has been mounted by an international team (led by investigators from BGI, Duke University, and the University of Copenhagen) for 48 avian species representing each order of the Neognathae infraclass (Table 2) and two Palaeognath orders (110–112), and complemented by a group of reptilian outgroup species genomes, the American alligator $(A.$ mississippiensis) (93) green sea turtle $(C.$ mydas) (96), and green anole lizard (A. carolinensis) (87). In a December 2014 release of some 28 papers

published in *Science, Genome Biology*, and other outlets, the richest comparative genomics analysis of any vertebrate group has appeared.

The findings of the collaborative Avian Phylogenomics Group address a wide variety of inquiries that we shall mention here only briefly, referring the reader to the more detailed reports for added substance (111–113; see also [http://www.sciencemag.org/content/](http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6215/1308.short) [346/6215/1308.short](http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6215/1308.short) and [http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6215/1308/suppl/DC1\)](http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6215/1308/suppl/DC1). For starters, the studies provided a robust redrawing of the phylogenetic history of avian orders and a genomics inquiry into the making of a bird, or rather a bird genome (Figure 3). The findings help resolve the debate on the timing of the Neoaves divergence, dating it to around 66 Mya in a nearly starlike, big bang radiation of species. Targeted genomic screens for association were offered for special adaptations that are unique to birds, including vocal learning, skeletal adaptations to flight, feather development, dietary and developmental components to endentulism (toothlessness), wide-wavelength visual capacity, sex determination, sexual adaptations, behaviors, plumage color varieties, endogenous retroviral footprints, genome contraction relative to reptiles and mammals, genome exchange breakpoints, and ecological accommodation. Inspired by their own success, the G10K example, and the vast biospecimen collections already inventoried, the Avian Phylogenomics Group and an international consortium of scientists are pursuing a Bird 10K initiative to capture whole genome sequences for every living bird species.

The avian phylogenomic efforts have also addressed and informed many of the bioinformatics challenges listed here that in turn inform all envisioned interspecies comparative genomic efforts. Better ad hoc phylogenetic algorithms were developed and more robust and comparable assemblies and alignment stipulations were tested with real species by the bird exercise. In many ways, the genomes generated from the 48 bird species offer a refreshing preview to the hopes and perils of the coming adventures for the G10K Project.

MAMMALS

Mammals comprise approximately 9% of the total diversity of vertebrates, but they have received a disproportionate focus from WGS studies. This no doubt stems from the fact that humans are nested among the eutherian mammals and that understanding the genomes of our closest mammalian relatives will provide insights into our own biology. A recent comparative genomic analysis of the functional elements among 29 eutherian genomes showed that up to 5.5% of the human genome has evolved through purifying selection and also allowed identification of ~4.2% of the genome that is comprised of constrained bases (i.e., nucleotide positions that show conservation across most or all 29 eutherian genomes) (114). Moreover, this analysis provided strong evidence for the dispersal of transposable elements across mammalian genomes and the accelerated evolution of specific elements along the primate lineage. The mammal and bird genome studies illustrate a timely glimpse of the profound insights gained when a large number of phylogenetically diverse genomes are analyzed in a comparative context.

Many but not all projects for sequencing mammalian genomes were initiated at major genome sequencing centers (the Broad Institute, the Genome Institute at Washington University, Baylor College of Medicine Human Genome Sequencing Center, and BGI-Shenzhen). Species targeted for de novo sequencing by these research centers and independent groups have been sampled from across the mammalian supra-ordinal groups (Monotremata, Marsupialia, Afrotheria, Laurasiatheria, Euarchontoglires, and Xenarthra). Emphases have concentrated among four orders of mammals: Carnivora (cats, dogs, bears, and their allies), Cetartiodactyla (ungulates, dolphins, and whales), Primates (great apes and monkeys), and Rodentia (mice, rats, and allies) (Tables 2 and 3) (Figure 4). Eutherian mammalian outgroups for which there are published genome sequences include two marsupials and one monotreme mammal (Table 2). The number of mammals sequenced has risen to 111 (66 published and 45 near completion) (Tables 2 and 3). Indeed, 41% of accomplished vertebrate genome sequence analyses involve mammals.

The mammal species selected for WGS by the initial BGI-G10K collaboration were chosen for reasons described previously (1) with attention to avoiding competitive overlap between the different genome sequencing centers. This has provided an opportunity to begin filling in the branches of the mammal tree of life by focusing on family-level representatives and/or closely related species (Figure 4). Our selection from Carnivora includes four species of large cats (tiger, Panthera tigris; African lion, Panthera leo; cheetah, Acinonyx jubatus; and American puma, *Puma concolor*). Combined with the felid genome projects being carried out by other research groups, this means that reference genomes will be available for four of the eight major lineages of the Felidae (115). The largest focus of the BGI-G10K collaborative project is in the Cetartiodactyla, with 16 species targeted for de novo sequencing, for which draft assemblies have been completed for 11 species, with a dozen more in progress. Species in this group were chosen not only to address questions related to domestication and understanding of the genetic basis of particular adaptations [e.g., highaltitude adaptation in the domestic yak (116)] but also with an emphasis on understanding the role of genomic architecture and chromosomal rearrangement in genome and organismal evolution (e.g., Reference 42). Primate studies have received focused efforts owing to interest in organization, evolution, and adaptation of the human genome (117). Studies of great apes, including chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans, have contributed insights into population expansions and reductions as well as phylogeography of our closest relatives, all of which are endangered species (e.g., Reference 118).

The G10KCOS identified several broad research themes that will be used to choose the next round of mammal species for WGS. Species were chosen not only based on their phylogenetic distribution but also with regard to addressing fundamental questions in evolution, behavior, ecology, physiology, and conservation. For example, pairs or groups of species from canids to Old World primates were identified that could be used to address fundamental questions on the genomics of speciation, such as the identification of regions (or islands) of high divergence that may be involved in reproductive isolation that change in size and dimension over time (see, e.g., Reference 119). Another theme revolved around comparing species, particularly within bats and marsupials, that differ dramatically in metabolic rate and how this relates to differences in body size and longevity (e.g., Reference 120). Many mammals, such as bears, squirrels, bats, and opossums, undergo hibernation as

part of their life history, and therefore, pairs of species within each of these groups were identified for WGS to explore the genomic basis of hibernation and the ability to deal with deleterious effects of hibernation (e.g., Reference 121). Finally, given the potential revolutionary impact of genomics on conservation genetics and management (122), several species will be targeted for WGS that are amenable to addressing fundamental questions related to inbreeding and outbreeding depression, disease resistance, and use of genomic information to guide and inform deextinction efforts.

ANCIENT VERTEBRATE PALEOGENOMES

Although de novo genome sequencing of extant species exploits high-quality DNA extracted from purposefully collected tissues, another topic that fires the public imagination is paleogenomics— the sequencing and analysis of genome-scale information from historic or ancient samples, particularly those representing extinct species. Until recently, the sequencing of paleogenomes would have been inconceivable, owing to the sheer number of PCR-based Sanger sequencing reactions required to recover the gigabases of information within a preserved eukaryotic cell. Following publication of draft genomes of ancient humans, horses, and extinct species of Neandertals, Denisovans, the woolly mammoth, and passenger pigeons, popular perception has moved from asking if paleogenomes can be sequenced to when it will happen (124–128).

Considerable challenges to paleogenomic sequencing remain, however. Firstly, although the achievements thus far are undeniably impressive, the financial and physical resource requirements for paleogenomic sequencing remain beyond the capabilities of most research programs. Secondly, although experimental protocols for isolating paleogenomic data have improved considerably within the past several years, different preservation contexts clearly require different experimental approaches, and the field remains in the early stages of fully understanding how and why DNA is sometimes preserved. Thirdly, even if specimens are identified that contain high concentrations of target DNA relative to DNA from exogenous sources that colonize the sample postmortem, this target DNA will be heavily fragmented and damaged, precluding the generation of large-insert libraries or ultra-long reads that are critical for scaffolding de novo genome assemblies. As a result, most extinct genomes will, at best, be assembled via mapping to high-quality genomes of extant relative species—the success of which is limited by evolutionary distance. For example, extrapolation from in silico and experimental data sets based around mapping ancient sequencing reads to various mammal genomes suggests that at 5–6 My divergence (e.g., elephant-mammoth), 60–80% of the genome will map, whereas at >60 My (e.g., moa-extant ratite), success could fall below 20% (129, 130).

THE GENOMIC ROAD AHEAD

The G10K Project has fostered and witnessed many accomplishments and discoveries since its inception in 2009. The number of vertebrate species for which whole genomes are being produced or have been published has increased dramatically and will likely continue to rise exponentially in the future. By bringing together biologists, bioinformaticians, and computational scientists, the G10KCOS has tried to lead the way in establishing best

practices in biospecimen collection and preparation as well as in genome assembly and alignment. As we have shown in this review, such efforts will need to be applied to other areas of analysis, especially for genomes of large size. The successes so far provide optimism for the future. Genome science continues to be a dynamic field with advancing technologies. Although the vast majority of genome sequencing performed today is on the Illumina platform, and assembly algorithms are dominated by de Bruijn graphs, this may not be true in five years. It is difficult to estimate how genome science will change in the next decade. There are a variety of exciting new technologies, but it is impossible to perform cost-benefit analyses without the products themselves and the algorithms designed to use them. These advances afford new opportunities for elucidating the changes in genome structure and sequence that have resulted in the diversity of vertebrate life. The generation of reference genomes is finding application in health and well-being of humans and other vertebrates and is being applied to efforts for stewardship of our planetary biodiversity and efforts to conserve species threatened with extinction.

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DRAFT STANDARDS FOR GENOME 10K

The G10KCOS continued an ongoing process of setting standards for "doing a vertebrate genome" that actually began in 2009 with the first G10K workshop. The groups recognized nine important areas for discussion and recommendations that all bear on what a G10K species genome project should encompass. Detailed reports about each of these areas have been or will be published separately and deposited on the G10K website for guidance in nomination and sequence analyses of present and future selected species. Similar recommendations for standards have appeared for other genome consortia (Table 1). The areas of consideration, discussed throughout this article but summarized here, include

- **1. Standards for biospecimen collections and DNA provision**. In general, approximately 100 μg of high–smolecular weight DNA (>50 Kbp) are ideal for construction of high–molecular weight mate-pair libraries. These should be from a single individual selected for minimal heterozygosity to optimize assembly. A detailed description of standards for DNA collection, storage, and processing for G10K has appeared (4).
- **2. Recommendations for WGS of males and females**. G10K recommends that sequencing of both a male and female be considered for each new species. Comparisons of male to female genomes implicate specific (Y or W) sequences, including dosage-dependent gene regions critical for pinpointing the sex-determining gene (s) (e.g., Reference 131). If sequencing both sexes is not possible, the heterogametic sex should be chosen, because XY males and ZW females represent both sex chromosomes and comprise unabridged sex chromosome genes useful for quality control, population, and forensic applications.
- **3. Sequencing standards**. These standards involve optimal quality control standards for current generation sequencing, including >60× coverage to assure that >98% of the species' euchromatic genome is represented.
- **4. Assembly standards**. G10K standards for assembly encourage large contig and scaffold N50 (on the order of megabases), while minimizing (to a very few) the number of false joins that create chimeric scaffolds using an independent physical map–based framework. There is a cost-benefit consideration here, as some physical maps are very accurate but impractical owing to expense in many species (e.g., a pedigree linkage map in a humpback whale). Physical maps can be generated by various methods (Table 4), and a promising but as-yet-unfulfilled hope is the connecting of contigs to scaffolds using long-read technologies that are not yet optimized or scaled to larger vertebrate genomes (Table 4). Nonetheless, every good genome sequence seems to benefit from high-resolution physical maps (20).
- **5. Genome annotation standards**. A G10K genome should have genes, SNPs, indels, repetitive elements, and other genome features annotated so the noncomputational user can access the genomic features and aspects readily.

Table5 gives a listing of some standard genome features and publically available software that help annotate them.

- **6. Standards for archiving and placing a genome in a browser**. It is essential that a final genome assembly be submitted to the International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC, [http://www.insdc.org/\)](http://www.insdc.org/) so that it is available in a standard repository to all scientists. Submission to the INSDC can occur through the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) [\(http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/)), European Bioinformatics Institute [\(http://www.ebi.ac.uk/ena\)](http://www.ebi.ac.uk/ena), or DNA Databank of Japan ([http://](http://www.ddbj.nig.ac.jp/) www.ddbj.nig.ac.jp/). The G10KCOS also encourages that all new genomes should be loaded into a genome browser, such as Gbrowse (132), JBrowse (133), track data hubs on the UCSC Genome Browser (134), NCBI, or Ensembl, for viewing and downloading. This format for viewing genomes is convenient and familiar and very much more useful to biological researchers than a trace archive or raw reads.
- **7. Standards for genome alignment**. Every species' genome has an evolutionary context and is indisputably connected to all others in a deep evolutionary genealogy that must be better understood. The first step in comparative genomics is to align homologous segments across related genomes so that comparative analyses can be achieved. No perfect algorithm for genome alignment has been developed or claimed, especially for the large vertebrate genomes we discuss here. The Alignathon community of G10K has endeavored to maximize consensus experience in the Alignathon competition discussed elsewhere in this article (51). Achievement of best practices and transfer of these alignment methods to the next generation of genome scientists are goals that the G10KCOS embraces.
- **8. G10K data release**. The G10KCOS endorses rapid publication and release of genome sequences in the spirit of facilitating wide uses and application. All species' genome sequences, assembly, and annotation shall be released freely with public access upon publication or within two years of delivery of a sample to a sequencing facility, whichever comes first. The latter clause is intended to handle cases of delayed publication.
- **9. Platinum Genome 10K species**. Owing to cost limitation, not all species will enjoy the scientific rigor demanded by the standards outlined above; indeed, some light-coverage sequences will be assessed, e.g., for SNP discovery, with no attention to de novo assembly and annotation. To facilitate genomic studies of such genomes, selected reference genomes called platinum genomes should be nominated for major taxonomic groups (e.g., orders or large families that differ by 30–50 My of evolutionary time). The G10KCOS will nominate reference species for which high-resolution physical maps or a long-insert sequencing equivalent will be generated and monitor the progress

of such projects to maximize genome opportunities for these platinum species.

Figure 1.

Consensus phylogeny of the major lineages of vertebrates. Topology and divergence dates (Ma) are consensus estimates derived from References 1 and 276 and included citations. Following the common names of taxon groups in parentheses are number of living species for that group and number of species with published and/or pending genomes (see Tables 2 and 3).

Figure 2.

Consensus phylogeny of the major lineages of fishes. Topology and dates (Ma) are derived from combined data tree reported in Reference 1. On the ends of the limbs is the number of living species for that group. Following the common names of taxon groups is number of species with published and/or pending genomes (see Tables 2 and 3).

Figure 3.

Consensus phylogeny of the major lineages of birds. In parentheses are the number of living species as defined by Howard and Moore (277), with the exception of the Passerine species count, which is taken from (1)/number of species with published and/or pending genomes (Tables 2 and 3). Data include both those genomes published to date as listed in Table 2 and those currently undergoing final assembly and annotation as part of the Avian Phylogenomic Consortium (Table 3). The underlying time-calibrated phylogenetic tree is a composite of

the Neognath phylogeny published by Jarvis et al. (112) and Palaeognath phylogeny published by Mitchell et al. (278). Illustrations courtesy of Jon Fjeldå.

Figure 4.

Consensus phylogeny of the major lineages of mammals. Topology and dates (Ma) are consensus estimates derived from References 1 and 276 and included citations. Following the common names of taxon groups in parentheses are the number of living species for that group and number of species with published and/or pending genomes (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 1

Goals of the Genome 10K Project (see text for details)

Table 2

List of 164 vertebrate genomes that have been published as of December 9, 2014 1

REFERENCE

BIOPROJECT ID

GENBANK ACCESSION

FAMILY

ORDER

COMMON NAME

SPECIES

Author Manuscript Author Manuscript

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Table 3

List of 113 vertebrate genomes that either are unpublished or have been targeted for de novo sequencing through the BGI-G10K collaborative effort

Long-read and mapping technologies that promise to improve genome assemblies Long-read and mapping technologies that promise to improve genome assemblies

Table 5

Example tools used for genome assembly, annotation of genome features, and mapping

 $a²$ See review by Yandell & Ence (6).

 b See review by Zhao et al. (270).

 c See reviews by Merkel & Gemmell (271) and Lim et al. (272).

 $d_{\text{See reviews by Oleksyk et al. (273) and Scheinfeldt & Tishkoff (274).}$