1 **Well-resolved phylogeny supports repeated evolution of keel flowers as a synergistic**
2 **contributor to papilionoid legume diversification**
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Summary

▯ The butterfly-shaped keel flower is a highly successful floral form in angiosperms. These flowers steer the mechanical interaction with bees and thus are hypothesized to accelerate pollinator-driven diversification. The exceptionally labile evolution of keel flowers in Papilionoideae (Fabaceae) provides a suitable system to test this hypothesis.

▯ Using 1,456 low-copy nuclear loci, we confidently resolve the early divergence history of Papilionoideae. Constrained by this backbone phylogeny, we generated a time tree for 3,326 Fabales to evaluate the tempo and mode of diversification within a state-dependent evolutionary framework.

▯ The first keel flowers emerged around 59.0 Ma in Papilionoideae, predating the earliest fossil by 3–4 million years. The Miocene diversification of Papilionoideae coincided with rapid evolution of keel flowers. At least six independent origins and thirty-two losses of keel flowers were identified in Papilionoideae, Cercidoideae, and Polygalaceae. However, the state-dependent diversification model was not favored.

▯ Lack of radiation associated with keel flowers suggests that diversification within Papilionoideae was not solely driven by pollinator-mediated selection, but instead an outcome of the synergistic effects of multiple innovations including nitrogen fixation and chemical defense as well as dispersal into subtropical and temperate regions.

Keywords: Fabales, floral evolution, pollination-driven speciation, coalescent method, phylogenomics, SSE model

INTRODUCTION

Animal pollination is one of the most striking features of angiosperms (Kay *et al.*, 2006). Adaptive radiations associated with floral specialization are among the most widely discussed concepts in evolutionary biology since the era of Darwin (1862). Comparative analyses revealed several floral traits including zygomorphy that are frequently linked with species-rich clades (Sargent, 2004; O'Meara *et al.*, 2016). Further ecological investigations provided mechanistic explanation through which zygomorphy can effectively guide pollinator behavior and exclude less effective pollinators via visual and structural aids (Neal *et al.*, 1998; Sargent, 2004; Yoder *et al.,* 2020). Variations in the spatial organization of the perianth, stamen, stigma, and nectar spur can further localize pollen deposition spots, thus increasing reproductive isolation (Ree, 2005; Muchhala & Potts, 2007). Moreover, higher pollination efficiency and precision in zygomorphic flowers may bolster species persistence by reducing extinction risks (Kay *et al.*, 2006). However, additional intrinsic (e.g., chemical defenses) and extrinsic factors (e.g., biome shifts) are often associated with lineages with specialized floral syndromes. This makes it challenging to understand the relative role of key innovations like floral specialization in promoting diversification. Indeed, about half of the comparative studies published to date did not identify a significant correlation between reproductive traits and increased diversification rate (Helmstetter *et al.,* 2023). Therefore, there is a growing trend in the field to recognize the synergistic multidriver hypothesis of angiosperm radiation rather than the key innovation hypothesis (Magallón & Castillo, 2009; Augusto *et al.,* 2014; Donoghue & Sanderson, 2015). Along these lines, papilionoid legumes (subfamily Papilionoideae, Fabaceae) are especially suitable to test key innovation versus synergistic hypotheses given their highly specialized keel flower and a suite of defense traits and biome shift history known to impact legume diversification (Lewis *et al.*, 2005).

Legumes are among the most ecologically and evolutionarily successful plant families on Earth. With approximately 23,000 species and 800 genera, they have defined biomes from tropical savannas to temperate sagebrush steppes (Schrire *et al.*, 2005; Lewis *et al.*, 2005; LPWG, 2017; Legume Data Portal, https://www.legumedata.org/). Members of Fabaceae subfamilies often exhibit lineage-specific floral traits tailored to particular pollinators, such

as the showy stamens in the Mimosoid clade for bees, the night-blooming Caesalpinioideae

for moths and bats, and the distinctive butterfly-like keel flowers in Papilionoideae, which

are closely linked to bee pollination (Arroyo, 1981). Keel flowers are zygomorphic with one

highly differentiated standard petal, two wing petals, and a keel composed of two partially

to fully fused petals enclosing the reproductive organs (Westerkamp, 1997). Connation

among floral components, including stamens and keel petals, is common. They are most

commonly found in two species-rich clades within Fabales—Papilionoideae and

Polygalaceae, although with different ontogenetic origins (Bello *et al.*, 2010). The standard

serves as a visual attraction while the wings form the landing complex for pollinators

(Westerkamp & Weber, 1999). The zygomorphic form and fused stamens concealed by the

keel can effectively restrict the direction of entry by pollinators and aid with precise pollen

placement (Neal *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, many keel flowers exhibit primary and

secondary pollination mechanisms such as valvular, pump, explosive, and brush

mechanisms to prevent pollen waste and deposit pollen on particular bee body parts

(Leppik, 1966; Etcheverry *et al.*, 2012; Uluer *et al.*, 2022). Loss of keel flower traits in

Papilionoideae, including actinomorphy or even exposure of reproductive organs, can lead

to rapid transitions to hummingbird or bat pollination (Arroyo, 1981; Neill, 1987).

Moreover, several angiosperm families independently evolved the keel flower architecture,

including Ranunculaceae, Geraniaceae, Balsaminaceae, and Commelinaceae (Westerkamp,

1997). They exhibit structural and functional convergence for bee pollination, although

with divergent developmental pathways (Tucker, 1999, 2003; Prenner, 2004; Prenner &

Klitgaard, 2008; Bello *et al.,* 2012). Therefore, the evolution and maintenance of keel

flowers is considered to be an outcome of pollinator-mediated selection with the potential

to promote diversification (Grant, 1949; Stebbins, 1970; Rosas-Guerrero *et al.*, 2014;

Stewart *et al.*, 2022).

To rigorously assess trait-driven diversification, a system with high trait variability is

essential for robust comparative hypothesis testing (Ricklefs & Renner, 1994, 2000;

Donoghue & Sanderson, 2015). The remarkable diversity in floral symmetry and

architecture in the Papilionoideae offers an ideal model for such investigations. Although

keel flowers are considered an essential feature and a hallmark of Papilionoideae (Polhill *et*

al., 1981), there is considerable variation in floral symmetry in early diverging clades. For

example, members from the tribes Sophoreae and Swartzieae are frequently actinomorphic,

with five petals undifferentiated or even lost to various degrees (Pennington *et al.*, 2000;

Cardoso *et al.*, 2012, 2013b). Such morphological variability is comparable to that found in

the Caesalpinioideae, suggesting an exploratory phase when a broader range of ontogenetic

and morphological pathways were realized (Leite *et al.*, 2015). These genera are typically

species-poor and more than 80% have no more than ten extant species (Plants of the

World Online – POWO; https://powo.science.kew.org). In contrast, the keel flower is highly

constrained among the large non-protein-amino-acid accumulating (NPAAA) clade (ca.

10,200 species), which is mostly known for economically important crops like soybeans,

peas, lentils, and clovers (Choi *et al.*, 2022). These general observations have prompted our

speculation that the evolution of keel flowers may be associated with increased

diversification rates in Papilionoideae.

Testing these macroevolutionary hypotheses requires a robust and densely sampled

phylogeny. Over the past three decades, a general phylogenetic framework for Fabaceae

has been developed thanks to a tremendous network of global collaboration (LPWG, 2013,

2017). Six distinct subfamilies are recognized by the Legume Phylogeny Working Group

(LPWG), with Papilionoideae as the most species-rich subfamily comprising 14,000 species

in 503 genera (Lewis *et al.*, 2005; LPWG, 2017). However, the LPWG's (2017) phylogeny is

largely based on the plastid gene *matK*, which has obvious limitations when dealing with

rapid radiations or complex evolutionary scenarios such as hybridization (Barrett *et al.*,

2014; Morales-Briones *et al.*, 2021). In Papilionoideae, studies based on *matK* and complete

plastomes have consistently defined 22 well-supported clades but the relationships among

these clades remain poorly resolved (Wojciechowski *et al.*, 2004; McMahon & Sanderson,

2006; Cardoso *et al.*, 2012, 2013b; Zhang *et al.*, 2020; Choi *et al.*, 2022). Most significantly,

Swartzieae and the ADA clade have been individually proposed as sister to all remaining

Papilionoideae. Given that Swartzieae contains mostly non-keel flowered taxa with

frequent petal losses whereas the ADA clade contains largely keel flowered ones (Torke &

Schaal, 2008; Cardoso *et al.*, 2015), their placement will have a strong bearing on the timing

and evolutionary trajectory of keel flowers. Furthermore, many of the 22 clades are

characterized by tropical trees that are scarce in distribution and underrepresented in

previous studies. These include species-poor clades such as the African *Amphimas* Pierre ex

Harms, the Amazonian *Aldina* Endl., and the North American *Dermatophyllum* Scheele

(Cardoso *et al.*, 2013). Along these lines, recent advances in legume phylogeny using multi-

locus nuclear datasets have promising applications in resolving complex evolutionary

histories (Koenen *et al.*, 2021; Zhao *et al.*, 2021) and inspired us to apply this technique to

address the recalcitrant relationships within Papilionoideae.

Here, we examined the primary versus synergistic role of keel flower evolution in

Papilionoideae evolution. We first generated a phylogenomic dataset of 1,456 low-copy

genes from 287 species with a focus on recalcitrant clades. Using both coalescent and

concatenation methods, we inferred a robust species tree and consistently resolved the

early divergence history of Papilionoideae. This nuclear phylogeny was subsequently used

as the backbone to reconstruct a 3,326-species time tree of Fabales to explore the evolution

of keel flowers under a broader taxonomic context in Papilionoideae, Cercidoideae, and

Polygalaceae. Through ancestral character reconstruction and diversification rate inference,

we evaluated the degree to which this rate variation could be attributed to keel flowers in

light of a key innovation hypothesis. We considered lack of support for this hypothesis if

the trait-dependent diversification model was not preferred and discussed our results in

the context of the ecology and biogeography of legume species to identify the processes

that account for their extreme diversity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Taxon sampling

Our taxon sampling included 279 species broadly distributed across Papilionoideae, plus

eight species from other legume subfamilies as outgroups (Tables S1–2). The dataset

comprised an aggregation of 47 newly generated transcriptomes and 32 low-pass genomic

sequences (Table S1) as well as published sequences from 208 species from Zhao *et al.*

(2021) to broaden taxon sampling (Table S2). Newly generated transcriptomes and

genomic sequences were mostly from morphologically and evolutionarily representative

genera within Papilionoideae (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012; Choi *et al.*, 2022). Collectively the

dataset represented 19 of the 22 well-supported clades consistently recognized in the

subfamily (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012; Cardoso *et al.*, 2013b; Choi *et al.*, 2022). The three clades

we did not include are *Amphimas*, *Aldina*, and the recently described *Cabari* (Gregório *et al.*,

2024). All newly generated sequences were derived from plant materials collected in the

field or grown in the University of Texas at Austin greenhouses (Table S1). Voucher

specimens were deposited in the herbaria of the Rio de Janeiro Botanic Garden (RB), State

University at Feira de Santana (HUEFS), and the Billie L. Turner Plant Resources Center

(TEX-LL). For DNA and RNA extraction, the methods described previously by Lee *et al.*

(2021) and Zhang *et al.* (2013) were employed, respectively.

RNA sequencing and transcriptome assembly

Total RNA samples were shipped to GENEWIZ (South Plainfield, NJ, USA) for ribosomal

RNA (rRNA) depletion, library preparation, and sequencing of approximately 25 million

paired-end reads on an Illumina HiSeq platform (Illumina, San Diego, CA). We assessed the

quality of raw 150 bp paired-end reads using FastQC v.0.11.5

(www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/fastqc) and removed filtered adapters and

low-quality reads using TrimGalore v.0.5.0 (https://github.com/FelixKrueger/TrimGalore).

The rRNA was removed from the merged trimmed reads using SortMeRNA v.2.1 (Kopylova

et al., 2012) using eight rRNA databases for prokaryotes, archaea, and eukaryotes. Clean

RNA-Seq reads were assembled *de novo* using Trinity v.2.8.4 (Grabherr *et al.*, 2011), and

the assembled transcripts were subjected to the assessment of completeness and

redundancy using BUSCO v.4.1.0 (Benchmarking Universal Single-Copy Orthologs; Simão *et*

al., 2015) with the eudicots_odb10.2019-11-20 database. The number of raw reads and

BUSCO evaluation results are provided in Table S1. All newly generated reads are available

on GenBank Sequence Read Archive under Bioproject PRJNA1120003

(https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sra/PRJNA1120003).

Low-copy nuclear dataset assembly

We used the 1,559 low-copy nuclear loci identified by Zhao *et al.* (2021) for our

phylogenetic reconstruction. To recover these loci in our transcriptomes, we used the

profile hidden Markov models implemented in HMMER v3.3.2 (Johnson *et al.,* 2010) to

identify orthologs. Briefly, a DNA profile database was built for each locus using the

function 'hmmbuild' based on the DNA alignments from Zhao *et al.* (2021). These profiles

were then searched against the target transcriptomes with an e-value threshold of $1e^{-50}$

using 'hmmsearch'. We then extracted the best hit from each species as the candidate

ortholog using a custom Python script (all scripts available on GitHub repository

https://github.com/lmcai/Papilionoideae_phylogenomics).

To recover the same set of loci from our genome sequence data, we developed a new

function of the PhyloHerb pipeline (Cai *et al.*, 2022) to automatically extract nuclear loci

from low-pass genome sequencing data. Briefly, PhyloHerb accomplishes this in three steps

— mapping, assembly, and scaffolding. First, it mapped reads to the reference sequence

using the very-sensitive mode of Bowtie v2.3.4.1 (Langmead & Salzberg, 2012). Mapped

reads were then assembled into contigs using SPAdes v3.8.0 under the default setting

(Bankevich *et al.*, 2012). The contigs were scaffolded into full-length loci based on syntenic

information compared to the reference using BLAST with an e-value threshold of $1e^{-40}$.

These functions were integrated as the '-m assemb' and '-m ortho -nuc' functions in

PhyloHerb v1.1. For details, see the GitHub page

(https://github.com/lmcai/PhyloHerb/#iv-retrieve-low-copy-nuclear-genes). Finally, for

quality control purposes, we also estimated the nuclear genome coverage of genome

sequences using Jellyfish v2.3.0 with a kmer size of 21 (Marçais & Kingsford, 2011).

Sequence alignment, dataset cleaning, and phylogenetic inference

Sequence alignment of each locus was conducted in MAFFT v7.245 (Katoh & Standley, 2013)

under the default settings. The aligned sequences were subjected to three rounds of

stringent cleaning to remove excessive missing data and potential paralogs. First, we used

the '-missing' function in PhyloHerb to remove sequences with >70% ambiguous sites

including gaps in each locus. Second, a phylogeny-based ortholog identification method

from Yang and Smith (2014) was used to remove potential paralogs. To accomplish this, a

maximum likelihood (ML) phylogeny was inferred for each gene using the DNA alignments

from the previous cleaning step. The best substitution model was automatically

determined by ModelFinder implemented in IQ-TREE v.2.2.2.6 (Minh *et al.*, 2020).

Branches that were more than fifteen times the mean branch length were pruned from the

resulting trees using a custom Python script 'prune_long_branches.py' (available on GitHub,

see link above). Then, a phylogeny-based ortholog identification approach using the Python

script 'prune_paralogs_RT.py' (Yang & Smith 2014) was applied to further remove potential

contaminants of paralogs. Third, all DNA sequences were realigned using the MAFFT E-INS-

i algorithm (--genafpair --maxiterate 1000) after removing spurious sequences identified in

the previous steps. Sites with more than 70% missing data were removed from the

alignment using the '-gt 0.7' flag in trimAL v1.5.0 (Capella-Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2009). We also

found that the published alignments from Zhao *et al.* (2021) were site-trimmed, thus

creating systematic biases for phylogenetic inference (e.g., shared gaps for sequences from

Zhao *et al.* (2021) compared to species sampled by us). To accommodate this, we used a

custom Python script to mask all sites in our sequences that were present in >60% of

species but absent in >90% of species from Zhao *et al.* (2021). Loci with less than 199 (70%)

taxa were removed from downstream phylogenomic assessments. In the end, 1,456 out of

the 1,559 loci passed our screening criteria (Fig. S1).

To estimate a species tree using the multispecies-coalescent model, we first inferred

individual gene trees for each of the 1,456 loci in IQ-TREE. The best substitution model was

automatically determined by ModelFinder implemented in IQ-TREE and branch support

was evaluated by 1000 ultrafast bootstrap replications. The species tree was inferred from

1,456 gene trees using ASTRAL-III v5.7.8 (Zhang *et al.*, 2017) under the default settings.

Meanwhile, to further mitigate the impact of artificially resolved gene tree branches with

low support values, we used newick-utils v1.6 (Junier & Zdobnov, 2010) to collapse gene

tree branches with ultrafast bootstrap support values less than 70. We then inferred a

species tree with these gene trees containing polytomies in ASTRAL-III.

To infer the species tree using the concatenation methods, we first further subsampled the

loci based on length and missing data. Any loci with alignments shorter than 900 base pairs

(bp; 33% loci removed) or less than 227 species (80% of the total species) were excluded

from the concatenation analysis, which resulted in 672 loci. The concatenated supermatrix

was generated by the '-m conc' function in PhyloHerb, along with a gene delineation file

input into PartitionFinder 2. The best partition scheme for ML analyses employing the

general time reversible (GTR) + gamma model was selected by PartitionFinder 2 using the

heuristic search algorithm 'rcluster' (Lanfear *et al.*, 2017). We then inferred an ML

phylogeny of the 287 species using IQ-TREE with 100 traditional nonparametric bootstrap

replications (BP) under the GTR + gamma nucleotide substitution model and linked but

variable evolution rates for each partition with the '-p' flag.

Topology test

Several conflicting relationships emerged from the comparison between concatenation and

coalescent analyses. To explore the origin of these conflicts and identify the best-supported

phylogenetic scenarios, we conducted topology tests on six focal groups defined in Table S3.

By alternating the position of the focal group and fixing the rest of the tree, we inferred an

optimum phylogeny for competing scenarios in IQ-TREE. We then conducted the

approximately unbiased (AU), Kishino-Hasegawa (KH), and Shimodaira-Hasegawa (SH)

tests with 10,000 replicates as implemented in IQ-TREE. To compare the goodness-of-fit of

alternative species trees to gene trees under the coalescent model, we conducted a

pairwise likelihood ratio test (Liu *et al.*, 2019). We similarly optimized the branch length of

fixed topologies with alternative positions of the focal group in MP-EST v3.0 (Liu *et al.*,

2010). We used the test2.sptree function from the R package Phybase v2.0 (Liu & Yu, 2010)

to conduct the likelihood ratio test described in Liu *et al.* (2019). The likelihood ratio test

statistic is given by $\tau = 2(L_{\text{Tree2}} - L_{\text{Tree1}})$, in which L_{Tree1} and L_{Tree2} are the log-likelihoods of

the null and alternative hypotheses, respectively. The statistical significance (*p*-value) of

the comparison is evaluated by generating a null distribution of τ via bootstrap sampling

gene trees 100 times. Finally, to diagnose the causes of conflicting results, we examined the

gene (gCF) and site concordance factors (sCF), as well as gene-wise likelihood scores

implemented in IQ-TREE.

Bayesian divergence time estimation

To infer a Bayesian time tree, we subsampled the nuclear dataset to select the most clock-

like genes using SortaDate (Smith *et al.*, 2018). Total tree length, root-to-tip variance, and

topological congruence with the species tree were used as key indicators for phylogenetic

informativeness and stable molecular rate. We selected the 30 best genes (Table S4) for

dating to facilitate a reasonable running time of the Bayesian analysis, an approach

comparable to a recent study of Fabaceae divergence time (Koenen *et al.*, 2021). We

carefully selected eleven fossils to calibrate our molecular dating analyses, including four

fossils from representative eudicot lineages and seven well-recognized fossils within

Fabales (Table S5). In particular, the earliest fossil fruits and leaflets of Fabaceae from the

Early Paleocene (63.5 Ma) of the Denver Basin in Colorado, USA, were used to constrain the

stem group Fabaceae (Lyson *et al.*, 2019). Many recent fossils within Fabaceae were not

included because they provide redundant constraints compared to the eleven fossils we

selected. We used BEAST v.2.2.1 (Bouckaert *et al.*, 2014) to estimate divergence times

under the GTR substitution model, an uncorrelated relaxed molecular clock model, and a

birth-death tree prior. The topology was fixed to reflect the optimum species tree inferred

from the ASTRAL analysis. Fossil calibrations were set as exponential priors with the offset

minimum ages aligned with the fossils described in Table S5. The root node, for which we

used a normal prior at 128.6 Ma with a standard deviation of 1.0, truncated to minimum

and maximum ages of 113 Ma (the Aptian–Albian boundary) and 136 Ma (the oldest known

crown angiosperm fossil (Magallón *et al.*, 2015). We ran analyses under the uncorrelated

lognormal model for 100 million generations and confirmed convergence with Tracer

v1.7.1 (Rambaut *et al.*, 2018). The first 30% of the generations were discarded as burn-in

before summarizing median branch lengths and substitution rates with TreeAnnotator

from the BEAST package.

Time tree inference for a 3,326-species *matK* dataset of Fabales

To evaluate the macroevolutionary trends of floral diversification in Papilionoideae under a

broader taxonomic context, we generated a plastid *matK* gene dataset that included 3,106

species from 794 genera in Fabaceae (92% genus-level completeness), plus 220 additional

species from all other families in Fabales and outgroups. Sequences from Choi *et al.* (2022),

Legume Phylogeny Working Group (LPWG 2017), and Gregório *et al.* (2024) were

consolidated to generate the most comprehensive *matK* database for Fabaceae, and

combined with *matK* sequences from Polygalaceae, Surianaceae, and Quillajaceae available

on GenBank, which served as outgroups in Fabales (Table S6).

As a first step of data curation, we updated the nomenclature to reflect the most recent

effort from POWO, Flora e Funga do Brasil (https://floradobrasil.jbrj.gov.br/consulta; BFG

2022), and taxonomic studies from individual clades (e.g., Hughes *et al.*, 2022). Second, we

employed multiple rounds of phylogeny-guided cleaning for the *matK* sequence alignment.

Initial alignment was conducted with the translation align option of MAFFT v.7.490

implemented in Geneious Prime 2023.1.2 (https://www.geneious.com/) and was manually

inspected thereafter. For outgroup species, a separate alignment was generated using the

L-INS-i algorithm in MAFFT to accommodate higher sequence divergence across families.

These two alignments were then merged using the profile-profile alignment algorithm

implemented in ClustalX (Thompson *et al.*, 2003) and the final DNA alignment contained

3,315 aligned sites. A draft ML phylogeny was inferred under the GTR+I+G model with

1000 ultrafast bootstrap replications in IQ-TREE and we filtered the *matK* matrix

accordingly to remove misidentified and rogue taxa.

To infer a robust *matK* phylogeny for divergence time estimation, we used our well-

supported nuclear phylogeny to constrain the topology and node ages of major clades in

the *matK* dataset. This is necessary because the slow substitution rate of *matK* may result

in contentious relationships and the lack of sequence divergence among close relatives may

impact ancestral state estimation and divergence time estimation. As a result, relationships

between the following clades were constrained: the ADA, Swartzieae, Cladrastis, Vataireoid,

Exostyleae, Dalbergioid s.l., Genistoid s.l., Andira, Baphieae, and NPAAA. Relationships

within each clade and *between* all subfamilies and families remained as-is. With this

partially fixed topology, the ML phylogeny was inferred under the best fitting model in IQ-

TREE.

Secondary calibration points of thirty nodes from the Bayesian time tree (Table S7) were

used to infer the *matK* gene time tree under the penalized likelihood method implemented

in TreePL v1.0 (Smith & O'Meara, 2012). These calibration points were imposed as both

maximum and minimum age constraints to fix node ages. We then primed and cross-

validated our data to establish the best smoothing parameter (smooth = 10) for our dataset.

Finally, we conducted a thorough search to infer the best time tree.

Testing state-dependent diversification analysis

To explore the diversification dynamics across Fabales, we performed a Bayesian analysis

of macroevolutionary mixtures using the program BAMM v2.5.0 (Rabosky, 2014), which

assumed clade- and time-dependent diversification scenarios to detect shifts in

diversification rates. Reversible-jump Markov chain Monte Carlo was run for 20 million

generations on the complete Fabales phylogeny and sampled every 1,000 generations.

Posterior probabilities of rate shifts were summarized with the R package BAMMtools

v.2.1.6 (Rabosky *et al.*, 2014) and visualized using a customized script from Padfield *et al.*

(2024).

To explore whether the evolution of keel flowers drives pollinator-associated

diversification in clades like Papilionoideae (Fabaceae) and Polygaleae (Polygalaceae), we

estimated the divergence time history of Fabales under the state-dependent speciation and

extinction (SSE) models. First, we coded the floral type of all species as either keel or non-

keel flowers defined as above by Westerkamp (1997; Table S6). To infer the sampling ratio,

we used the powoGenera function from the R package expowo (Zuanny *et al.*, 2024) to

obtain the number of species for each genus based on the Plants of the World Online

database (https://powo.science.kew.org; Table S8). The total species number for the keel

flower clades and non-keel flower clades was enumerated to calculate the sampling ratio

for these two groups. Finally, we inferred the diversification rate under the state-

dependent and state-independent models using the R package hisse v2.1.8 (Beaulieu &

O'Meara, 2016). We estimated rate parameters for four types of models (Table S9): (1) the

Binary State Speciation and Extinction model (BiSSE), which allows state-dependent

diversification (i.e., keel versus non-keel) but does not include hidden states; (2) the

Hidden State Speciation and Extinction model (HiSSE), which allow both state-dependent

diversification as well as hidden states; (3) CID-2 and CID-4 models, which are state-

independent but allow differential diversification associated with the hidden states to

serve as the null model for BiSSE and HiSSE, respectively; and (4) the trait-free, hidden

state-only rate model MiSSE for tip rate estimation (Maddison *et al.*, 2007; Beaulieu &
O'Meara, 2016; Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2022). For the HiSSE analyses, we included models with
the number of hidden states from two to four, which encompassed all combinations of
hidden states supported in the hisse package. To reconstruct the ancestral states of keel
flowers, we used the function 'hisse' followed by 'MarginReconHiSSE' to infer the
speciation and extinction rates as well as ancestral states under the standard HiSSE model
with two hidden states. For the MiSSE analyses, the optimum number of hidden states was
tested for all possible configurations ranging from 1 to 26. The best model with the lowest
AIC was selected for downstream analysis. We then applied the 'MarginReconMiSSE'
function to estimate the tip rates and evaluate the correlation between floral architecture
and diversification. We conducted a phylogenetic ANOVA test using the phylANOVA
function from the R package phytools (Revell, 2012) to compare tip rates between keel and
non-keel like species. Besides testing SSE model fitness using the entire Fabales phylogeny,
we also applied the BiSSE, HiSSE, CID-2, and CID-4 models to a subsampled phylogeny that
only included Papilionoideae species. Together, this resulted in a total of 11 different
analyses (Table S9).
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RESULTS
An efficient phylogenetic data assembly pipeline based on a curated set of loci
BUSCO assessments for the assembled transcriptomes showed a high level of completeness,
with the percentage of complete orthologous genes ranging from 70.3% to 91.1% (Table
S1). The final multi-locus phylogenetic dataset included 1,456 genes with a mean length of
1,003 bp after trimming (Data S1). These loci on average contained 253 (85%) species and
the concatenated DNA dataset consisted of 941,354 sites with a gene and character
occupancy of 91.5% and 83.0%, respectively. None of our newly sequenced species
exhibited exceptional levels of missing data (<30% missing; Table S1), but three species
added from Zhao *et al.* (2021), which included *Pisum sativum* L., *Hesperothamnus*
pentaphyllus (Harms) Harms, and *Euchresta japonica* Hook. f. ex Regel, contained the
highest level of missing data (69–85% missing; Table S2).
420

Our comprehensive, genus-level taxon sampling represents multiple data collection

strategies, including high-quality reference genomes, RNA-seq, and low-pass genome

sequencing (i.e., genome skimming). Among these three approaches, our *in-silico* extraction

of phylogenetic markers from genomic sequencing data using PhyloHerb represents a cost-

effective approach to construct a multi-locus phylogeny, eliminating the need for target

enrichment library preparation. Genomic sequencing of the 32 Papilionoideae taxa yielded

25–30 million 150 bp paired-end reads and 1–15× nuclear coverage according to k-mer

distribution (Table S10; Data S2). In the final DNA matrix, the level of missing data in these

32 species was not statistically different from transcriptomic data (Welch two sample t-test

p-value = 0.08). Even for species with less than 2× nuclear genome coverage, at least 1,075

(74%) of the targeted loci were recovered (Table S10). Computationally, PhyloHerb is also

highly accessible. Extracting ~1,500 loci from each species on average requires 903.2s CPU

time and 2.9 GB peak memory including assembly and ortholog identification, which can be

completed on most laptops.

Multi-locus nuclear dataset resolves contentious relationships in Papilionoideae

To accommodate for incomplete lineage sorting, we used both coalescent and

concatenation methods for phylogenetic inference. The coalescent-based phylogeny

estimated by ASTRAL was largely congruent with the concatenation-based phylogeny

inferred by IQ-TREE and 92.6% and 89.1% of the nodes received maximum support (100

BP; 1.0 posterior probability, PP), respectively (Fig. 1).

Within Papilionoideae, the monophyly of 19 well-recognized clades was fully supported by

both coalescent and concatenation analyses (Fig. 1; Fig. S2). Relationships among these

clades were confidently resolved including those of recalcitrant lineages such as

Dermatophyllum, Sesbania, and the Andira clade (Fig. 1). The ADA, Swartzieae and

Cladrastis clades formed successive sister groups to all remaining members of

Papilionoideae — the 50-kb inversion clade (Fig. 1). Within the 50-kb inversion clade, the

Vataireoid and Exostyleae clades together formed a well-supported clade (100 BP; 1.0 PP)

sister to all other groups. The monophyly of the Vataireoid and Exostyleae clades was

strongly favored by both the AU test using the concatenated matrix and the likelihood ratio

test based on the multispecies coalescent (MSC) model. The alternative topology suggested

by Zhao *et al.* (2021), where these two groups were not monophyletic, was rejected (AU

test *p*-value < 0.01; MSC likelihood ratio test *p*-value <0.01; Table S3).

One major conflict in our results is the relative placement of the Dalbergioid s.l. (1,580 spp.)

and Genistoid s.l. (2,100 spp.) clades within the 50-kb inversion clade. A monophyletic

Dalbergioid s.l. + Genistoid s.l. clade was recovered but poorly supported by the

concatenation method (41 BP). On the other hand, the coalescent method supported the

monophyly of Dalbergioid s.l. plus the Andira, Baphieae, and NPAAA clades with high

confidence (0.98 PP; Fig. S2). The AU test on these two alternative topologies did not

provide definitive conclusions (*p*-value >0.05; Table S3) and the gene-wise likelihood

supporting each topology was approximately the same (Fig. S3). The MSC likelihood ratio

test, however, rejected the monophyletic Dalbergioid s.l. + Genistoid s.l. clade (*p*-value =

0.03). Within the Genistoid s.l. clade, tribes Ormosieae, Brongniartieae, and Leptolobieae

form successive sister groups to all remaining species (100 BP; 1.0 PP). *Dermatophyllum*

was confidently placed as sister to Brongniartieae (88 BP; 1.0 PP). The African

monospecific genus *Haplormosia* Harms was nested within the genistoids (98 BP; 0.90 PP).

Within the Dalbergioid s.l. clade, all previously identified major subclades were maximally

supported. Tribe Amorpheae appeared as sister to all remaining dalbergioids, and the

Adesmia, Dalbergia, and Pterocarpus subclades were phylogenetically successive sisters

(100 BP; >=0.99 PP).

The Andira, Baphieae, and NPAAA clades were each monophyletic and together formed a

grade comprising the remaining Papilionoideae. Within the NPAAA clade, the genus

Hypocalyptus Thunb. was sister to all other members of this clade (97 BP; 0.94 PP), while

the Mirbelioid, Hologalegina, and Indigofereae + Millettioid-Phaseoloid clades formed

successive sisters to Hypocalypteae. Within mirbelioids, both coalescent and concatenation

methods placed lineages from tribe Bossiaeeae as sister to a poorly supported clade

composed mostly of tribe Mirbelieae (<58 BP; <0.83 PP). Such low support could be

attributed to the two short internal branches (1.3–1.7e^{-3} in mutation units; 2.0–3.9e^{-2} in

coalescent units) separating Bossiaeeae, *Gompholobium* Sm, and the *Daviesia* Sm. +

Viminaria Sm. clade within Mirbelieae. These rapid radiations have rendered little

phylogenetic information to reconstruct this section of the phylogeny — the gene

concordant factor was 16.3% for the branch separating Bossiaeeae and Mirbelieae, while

14.0% of the genes supported the other two alternative quartet topologies at this node;

similarly, 16.0% of the genes supported the paraphyly of *Daviesia* + *Viminaria* and

Gompholobium, but one of the alternative topologies was supported by 17.4% of the genes

(Fig. 1; Data S3). Results from the site concordance factor largely reflected a similar trend

where each of the three quartet topologies was supported by 33% of the sites (Data S3).

The Millettioid-Phaseoloid clade within the larger NPAAA clade harbored more uncertainty.

The three genera *Aganope* Miq., *Austrosteenisia* R. Geesink and *Dalbergiella* Baker f. formed

a well-supported basal grade within the millettioids (100 BP; 1.0 PP). The concatenation

method confidently placed (100 BP) subtribe Clitoriinae — including *Centrosema* (DC.)

Benth., *Periandra* Mart. ex Benth. and *Clitoria* L. — as sister to *Dalbergiella*. In contrast, the

coalescent method placed Clitoriinae with a clade consisting of members from tribes

Desmodieae, and Psoraleeae, and the polyphyletic Phaseoleae with low confidence (0.31

PP). A clade comprising tribes Abreae, Diocleae, Millettieae formed the next diverging

group in the millettioids. The remaining millettioids included tribes Desmodieae,

Psoraleeae, and the polyphyletic Phaseoleae. In both coalescent and concatenation analyses,

Platycyamus regnellii Benth. and the *Butea* clade (*Spatholobus* Hassk., *Butea* Roxb. ex Willd.,

Hardenbergia Benth., and *Kennedia* Vent.) formed successive sister groups to all other

members within this clade (100 BP; 1.0 PP). Conflicts exist in terms of the placement of the

Apios clade (*Mucuna* Adans. and *Apios* Fabr.) and genus *Shuteria* Wight & Arn, which were

monophyletic (99 BP) in the concatenation analysis but paraphyletic (0.89 PP) in the

coalescent analysis.

Evolution of keel flowers in Fabales

The robust nuclear phylogeny was used to constrain the uncertain relationships among

major clades in the *matK*-based phylogeny. This broadly sampled phylogeny of Fabales

included 3,326 species — 3,106 Fabaceae (15.9% species diversity), 1 Quillajaceae (100%),

7 Surianaceae (55.6%), 206 Polygalaceae (15.4%), and 6 additional eudicots for dating

purposes. With fossil constraints, the time tree inferred by BEAST supported a Late

Cretaceous origin of crown group Fabales at 78.0 Ma (95% HPD 71.9–88.3 Ma; Fig. S4), and

an early Paleocene origin of crown group Fabaceae and Polygalaceae at 66.0 Ma (95% HPD

64.7–66.8 Ma) and 56.1 Ma (95% HPD 55.8–56.6 Ma), respectively. Within Fabaceae, we

inferred an explosive diversification leading to all six subfamilies within 7 million years

after the origin of the family. Crown group Papilionoideae was inferred to originate at 60.9

Ma (95% HPD 59.7–62.1 Ma; Fig. S4).

Keel flowers, which are mostly known in Papilionoideae and tribe Polygaleae

(Polygalaceae), have been independently lost and gained multiple times. Ancestral

character reconstruction suggested at least six independent origins of keel flowers in tribe

Polygaleae (Polygalaceae), *Cercis* L. (Cercidoideae), tribe Dipterygeae (ADA clade,

Papilionoideae), the MRCA of *Petaladenium* Ducke and *Dussia* Krug & Urb. ex Taub. (ADA

clade, Papilionoideae), *Myrospermum* Jacq. (ADA clade, Papilionoideae), and the MRCA of

the Cladrastis clade and the 50-kb inversion clade (Papilionoideae). In addition, there were

two independent losses of keel flowers in Polygalaceae and thirty in Papilionoideae

(summarized in Table S11; Fig. S5). These numbers, especially the losses, were strongly

dependent on the phylogeny. We inferred the ancestral floral architecture of

Papilionoideae to be non-keel-like, with the first keel flowers emerging in the common

ancestor of the Cladrastis and the 50-kb inversion clades around 59.0 Ma (95% HPD 57.9–

60.2 Ma). This is more recent than the origination of keel flowers in crown group

Polygalaceae, which included *Xanthophyllum* at 62.8 Ma (95% HPD 59.6–64.9 Ma), though

the exact order cannot be established with confidence due to overlapping confidence

intervals.

State-dependent diversification

The BAMM analysis inferred 18 rate shifts in Fabales and 11 of these shifts are nested

within Papilionoideae (Fig. 2a, c). The diversification rate increased gradually over time in

Fabales and nearly all rate shifts represented a significant acceleration in diversification

rates rather than a decrease (gray lines in Fig. 2b). With few exceptions, 9 out of the 11 rate

shifts in Papilionoideae took place during the Miocene. These Miocene rapid radiations

involved well known examples from the mimosoids, the genera *Lupinus* L. and *Astragalus* L.,

Psoraleeae, and Phaseolinae (clades A, H, K, L in Fig. 2a).

Although most rate shifts took place in the keel-flowered Papilionoideae, our

diversification rate analysis did not support the state-dependent models (Table S11). When

applying the state-dependent (BiSSE and HiSSE), the state-independent (CID-2 and CID-4),

and the completely trait-free models (MiSSE) to Fabales, MiSSE with 21 hidden states was

significantly better than the second-best CID-4 model, with a ΔAIC of 474.75. The

phylogenetic ANOVA analysis also confirmed no significant difference in the MiSSE tip rate

between keel and non-keel species (p-value = 0.71). This conclusion held when using a

subsampled phylogeny that included only Papilionoideae species. For these subsampled

analyses, only BiSSE, standard HiSSE with two hidden states, CID-2, and CID-4 were tested.

Among them, the state-independent CID-4 was significantly better than the second best

HiSSE model with a ΔAIC of 74.67. However, diversification parameters from both BiSSE

and HiSSE models suggested an orders-of-magnitude higher net diversification rate in keel-

flowered clades than non-keel-flowered clades. Specifically, HiSSE suggested the net

diversification rate to be 0.13 in keel-flowered clades and $5.3e^{-4}$ in non-keel-flowered clades;

BiSSE suggested it to be 0.082 in keel-flowered clades and $7.7e^{-4}$ in non-keel-flowered

clades.

DISCUSSION

Insights into the early divergence relationships within papilionoids

Previous phylogenetic studies focusing on the early divergences of papilionoid legumes

have largely utilized plastid markers (Wojciechowski *et al.*, 2004; Lavin *et al.*, 2005;

McMahon & Sanderson, 2006; Cardoso *et al.*, 2012, 2013b; Zhang *et al.*, 2020; Choi *et al.*,

2022). These studies have consistently recognized well-supported clades but struggled in

resolving inter-clade relationships. Based on 1,456 low-copy nuclear genes, we show that

the ADA, Swartzieae, and Cladrastis clades are successive sister groups to the 50-kb

inversion clade (Fig. 1). This result is congruent with the recent nuclear Fabaceae

phylogeny from Zhao *et al.* (2021) and a multi-locus phylogenetic study of the nitrogen-

fixing clade (Kates *et al.*, 2024) but differs from most plastid-based phylogenies where the

Swartzieae clade was placed as sister to all other Papilionoideae (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012;

Zhang *et al.*, 2020; Choi *et al.*, 2022). Our results also differ from the most recent

angiosperm phylogeny based on 353 nuclear genes where the ADA and Swartzieae clades

formed a monophyletic lineage sister to all other Papilionoideae (Zuntini *et al.*, 2024).

The 50-kb inversion clade constitutes 95% of the remaining species diversity in

Papilionoideae. Our well-resolved nuclear phylogeny provides several important insights

into relationships within this clade that were inconclusive in previous plastid sequence-

based studies. First, the Exostyleae and Vataireoid clades form a monophyletic group sister

to the remaining members of the 50-kb inversion clade (100 BP; 1.0 PP). Their close

relationship is morphologically supported by the denticulate, serrate, or occasionally

spinescent leaf margin, which is highly unusual outside the NPAAA clade in Papilionoideae

(Mansano *et al.*, 2004; Cardoso *et al.*, 2012, 2013a,b). Second, although conflicting

topologies are obtained when placing the Genistoid s.l. clade, statistically significant

support is only achieved for the coalescent analysis (Table S3). A monophyletic group

comprising the Genistoid s.l. and Dalbergioid s.l. clades was reported by Kates *et al.* (2024)

and Zuntini *et al.* (2024) but strongly rejected by our coalescent-based likelihood ratio test.

Instead, our ASTRAL phylogeny placed the Genistoid s.l. clade sister to a clade comprised of

the Dalbergioid s.l., Andira, Baphieae, and NPAAA clades (PP = 0.98). Within the latter clade,

the Dalbergioid s.l., Andira, and Baphieae clades form successive sister groups to the large

NPAAA clade — a relationship that has not been observed in any plastid sequence-based

study (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012, 2013b; Choi *et al.*, 2022).

Third, the genus *Dermatophyllum,* comprised of four North American species, has been a

clade recalcitrant to phylogenetic resolution in plastid-based investigations and often

formed a polytomy with the Dalbergioid s.l., Andira, and Genistoid s.l. clades

(Wojciechowski *et al.*, 2004; Cardoso *et al.*, 2012; Cardoso *et al.*, 2013b; Kates *et al.*, 2024).

We confidently placed *Dermatophyllum* as sister to tribe Brongniartieae within the

Genistoid s.l. clade (88 BP; 1.0 PP). This placement is supported by their shared niche

preference and the ability to synthesize a class of highly distinct alkaloids: *Dermatophyllum*

prefers warm temperate woodlands, chaparral, and deserts of southern United States to

central Mexico, which overlaps with many Mexican Brongniartieae especially in the genus
Brongniartia Kunth (Pennington *et al.*, 2005; Ross & Crisp, 2005). The presence of
quinolizidine alkaloids in *Dermatophyllum* further supports its placement within the
Genistoid s.l. clade (Cardoso *et al.*, 2013b; Choi *et al.*, 2022). This class of alkaloids is absent
in all other legumes and only sparsely distributed in eight other vascular plant families
(Bisby *et al.*, 1994; Kite & Pennington, 2003; Lee *et al.*, 2013; Wink, 2013; Cely-Veloza *et al.*,
2023). We thus demonstrate a single origin of alkaloid biosynthesis in papilionoids and a
chemical synapomorphy for the Genistoid s.l. clade.
615
Fourth, the close relationship between the African genus *Haplormosia* and the American-
Australian Brongniartieae clade proposed by Cardoso *et al.* (2017) is challenged by our
new result. Although several reproductive and vegetative features are shared between
these two lineages — including unifoliolate leaves; single-seeded, tardily dehiscent fruits
with thick, woody valves; and stamens with distinctly dimorphic anthers (Cardoso *et al.*,
2017) — the distinct biogeographic distribution makes the proposed relationship
contentious. Our results instead place *Haplormosia* within a group of largely Old-World
lineages, including *Camoensia* and the tribes Crotalarieae, Genisteae, Podalyrieae, and
Sophoreae (98 BP; 0.90 PP). Morphologically, species from Crotalarieae, Podalyrieae, and
Genistieae also exhibit unifoliolate leaves and dimorphic anthers that are alternately
basifixed and dorsifixed (Schutte-Vlok & van Wyk, 2011; Le Roux & Van Wyk, 2012; du
Preez *et al.*, 2021).
628
Finally, the NPAAA clade contains a whopping ca. 10,200 species that account for nearly 70%
of species diversity in papilionoids. It is sister to the predominantly African Baphieae clade
with ca. 60 species (100 BP; 1.0 PP). The NPAAA clade comprises two large, strongly
supported subclades, the *Hologalegina* (Robinioid+IR-lacking clade) and Indigofereae +
Millettioid-Phaseoloid clades, in agreement with all previous molecular phylogenetic
studies (Wojciechowski *et al.*, 2004; Cardoso *et al.*, 2013b; LPWG, 2017; Zhao *et al.*, 2021).
Within Hologalegina (ca. 5,300 spp.), the relationship between *Sesbania* and tribes Loteae
and Robinieae was highly unstable with all combinations of relationships recovered using
plastid data (Wojciechowski *et al.*, 2004; Farruggia *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2020; Choi *et*

al., 2022). Our results confirm *Sesbania* as sister to the warm temperate, primarily

northern hemisphere Loteae (100 BP; 1.0 PP), and together they form a sister group to

Robinieae (100 BP; 1.0 PP). The paraphyletic relationship among *Sesbania,* Loteae, and

Robinieae proposed by Zhao *et al.* (2021) is strongly rejected by our AU test (*p*-value < 0.01)

and MSC likelihood ratio test (*p*–value < 0.01). Relationships within the IR-lacking clade

(IRLC) align with recent studies using plastid and nuclear sequences (Choi *et al.*, 2022;

Zhao *et al.*, 2021). Relationships within the primarily subtropical to pantropical

Indigofereae + Millettioid-Phaseoloid clade (ca. 4,050 spp.) are consistent with earlier

findings (Hu *et al.*, 2000; Wojciechowski *et al.*, 2004; Stefanović *et al.*, 2009; LPWG, 2017;

Oyebanji *et al.*, 2020; Zhao *et al.*, 2021; Choi *et al.*, 2022).

Loss and gain of keel flowers during the diversification of the papilionoids

A suite of reproductive, nutritional, and defense traits has contributed to the assemblage of

present legume biodiversity (Lewis *et al.*, 2005). Here we focused on the floral form in

papilionoid legumes and more broadly in Fabales, which has been widely invoked to

explain the radiation of many angiosperms (Sargent, 2004; Kay & Sargent, 2009; Givnish *et*

al., 2015). Bilaterally symmetrical flowers such as keel flowers are strongly associated with

bee pollination because the banner and wing petals can attract and orient the pollinators

while the keel petals restrict the entry to pollen (Neal *et al.*, 1998). The relative position of

the keel, pistil, and stamens also facilitates the precise placement of pollen to pollinators

and thus discourages gene flow between incipient species (Neal *et al.*, 1998). Despite being

a stereotyped search image for legumes, there is great lability in floral form and symmetry

during the early evolution of papilionoids (Fig. 2). This provides an ideal comparative

framework to test whether the evolution of keel flowers drives diversification (Ricklefs &

Renner, 1994, 2000). Extending our hypothesis testing to Fabales not only broadens the

investigation to another important keel lineage in Polygalaceae, but also offers

evolutionary context for this highly specialized floral form.

Our well-resolved nuclear gene and densely sampled plastid *matK* gene phylogenies

provide the essential evolutionary framework to address this question. Crown group

Fabaceae was estimated to originate at the K-Pg boundary at 66.0 Ma (95% HPD 64.7–66.8

Ma), which is in line with previous molecular-based estimates and fossil records (Lavin *et*
al., 2005; Bruneau *et al.*, 2008; Cannon *et al.*, 2015; Koenen *et al.*, 2021; Zhao *et al.*, 2021).
The ancestral floral architecture of Papilionoideae is estimated to be non-keel-like, with the
first keel flowers in Fabaceae emerging in the common ancestor of the Cladrastis and the
50-kb inversion clades at 59.0 Ma (95% HPD 57.9–60.2 Ma). This estimate predates the
earliest known papilionoid-like flower fossil *Barnebyanthus buchananensis* Crepet &
Herendeen by 3 million years (Crepet & Herendeen, 1992) and closely succeeded the
evolution of keel flowers in crown group Polygalaceae at 62.8 Ma (95% HPD 59.6–64.9 Ma).
However, these estimates contradict the results of a recent study which concluded that
papilionoid keel flowers evolved 22.03 to 10.32 million years before they occurred in
crown group Polygalaceae (Uluer *et al.*, 2022).
680
Such a discrepancy comes mainly from the ancestral state reconstruction analysis of keel
flowers themselves, but also from minor differences in divergence time estimation due to
taxon sampling and methodology. Unlike the crown group Papilionoideae origination
proposed by Uluer *et al.* (2022), our results suggest a more dynamic evolutionary history of
keel flowers with four independent origins that postdate crown group Papilionoideae
(Table S11; Fig. S5). Three of these events are nested within the ADA clade (e.g.,
Dipterygeae and *Myrospermum*), taking place in the Neotropics during the Miocene. The
two oldest keel flower lineages originated during the Selandian age of the Paleocene in
Papilionoideae and Polygalaceae, though the exact order cannot be confidently established.
However, the short interval between these two old events and multiple more recent origins
of keel flowers in the ADA and polygalean clades may result from younger lineages
inheriting and further consolidating the strong relationship with pollinators already
established by older keel lineages (Tucker, 2002; Bello *et al.*, 2012; Uluer *et al.*, 2022).
694
In addition to gains, perhaps what is more intriguing is the numerous losses of keel flowers.
We identified more than two dozen independent losses in Papilionoideae alone (Table S10).
These results suggest that ancestral Fabaceae likely took a generalist pollination strategy,
allowing floral symmetry and petal number to be more labile (Arroyo, 1981; Bruneau *et al.*,
2014; Sinjushin, 2021). This is exemplified in multiple early branching papilionoids such as

Harleyodendron R.S. Cowan with rosid-like radial symmetry and lost, reduced, or poorly

differentiated petals. These modifications are accompanied by expansion or shifts of

pollinators to bats, passerine birds, hummingbirds, and even beetles (e.g., Arroyo, 1981;

Pennington *et al.*, 2000; Lewis *et al.*, 2003). Such pronounced heterogeneity in floral

architecture and pollination syndrome mirrors the early evolution of angiosperms and

many clades in Gesneriaceae and Ranunculales (Damerval & Nadot, 2007; Martén-

Rodríguez *et al.*, 2009; Endress, 2010). While up to 28 losses of keel flowers occurred in

early branching papilionoids, only three were found within the NPAAA clade, which

accounts for more than 70% of species diversity in Fabaceae. All three losses were

restricted to the genus *Erythrina* L. (Millettioid-Phaseoloid clade), which is a pantropical

genus of ca. 120 bird pollinated, mainly arborescent species (Bruneau, 1996, 1997). Species

in *Erythrina* still retain the bilateral floral architecture but differentiate from a typical keel

flower in that the stamens and style are exposed rather than protected. Their exceptionally

long upper banner petal forms a pseudotubular structure enclosing the other petals,

whereas the banner in a typical keel flower folds convexly upward into a boat-shape

(Nesom, 2015).

The majority of the NPAAA clade, on the other hand, exhibited significant conservatism in

floral form. We hypothesize this to be a joint outcome of ecological pressures imposed by

pollinators and herbivores as well as developmental canalization (Bruneau *et al.*, 2014;

Carvalho *et al.*, 2023; Ojeda *et al.*, 2019). Although most Fabaceae are bee-pollinated

regardless of floral architecture, more reliable and specialized bee associations are

developed with true keel flowers in Papilionoideae (Armbruster, 2014; Arroyo, 1981;

Fenster *et al.*, 2004). The NPAAA clade has diversified largely since the Oligocene under

global cooling, aridification, and expansion of grasslands (Estep *et al.*, 2014; Herbert *et al.*,

2016). The IRLC, Indigofereae, and Robinioid clades are thus strongly associated with

herbaceous growth habit in arid to semi-arid temperate regions (Wojciechowski *et al.*,

2004; Schrire *et al.*, 2005, 2009). Thus adaptation to these habitats may cast additional

geographical, environmental, and developmental constraints to limit the breadth of viable

pollinators in the NPAAA clade. Moreover, empirical studies from various plant families

have also shown that highly developed corollas may protect young buds and fruits from

herbivory (Carvalho *et al.*, 2023; Herrera, 2010; Gao *et al.*, 2019). Finally, developmental

canalization may also contribute to homeostasis in floral architecture (Mabberley & Hay,

1994; Leite *et al.*, 2015; Ojeda *et al.*, 2019). The modularized genetic programs for floral

development can produce consistent phenotypes buffered against internal and external

influences (i.e., canalization; Moyroud & Glover, 2017). Many ontogenetic modules for keel

flowers are shared between Polygalaceae and Fabaceae (Westerkamp & Weber, 1999;

Prenner, 2004; Bello *et al.*, 2010) and in many cases demonstrate increased canalization

among recently diverged angiosperms lineages (Endress, 2011). The conservation of keel

flower developmental pathways, including the MADS-BOX and CYC genes for floral

symmetry and whorl identity (Singh *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.,* 2010), may further contribute

to the prevalence of keel flowers in derived Papilionoideae.

A synergistic multidriver hypothesis for the diversification of Papilionoideae

Evolutionary biologists have been constantly searching for key innovations or

environmental stimulants of angiosperm diversity (see reviews from Helmstetter *et al.*,

2023; Sauquet & Magallón, 2018). In particular, the direct involvement of floral traits in

sexual reproduction has prompted great interest in exploring its phenotypic diversity and

link with species diversification (Kay *et al.*, 2006). Zygomorphy (Sargent, 2004; Kay &

Sargent, 2009), animal pollination (Muchhala, 2006), and nectar spurs (Hodges and Arnold,

1995) have all been suggested to enhance speciation rates. However, a growing body of

empirical studies suggested that angiosperm diversification cannot be tied to a single key

innovation or major global event (Augusto *et al.*, 2014; Vamosi *et al.*, 2018). Instead,

various combinations of traits, environment, and ecology may have acted to stimulate

diversification in different groups (Augusto *et al.,* 2014; Magallón & Castillo, 2009). Such

synergistic interaction between multiple, perhaps sequential, intrinsic and extrinsic

contributors of diversification rate has been coined as 'synnovation' by Donoghue and

Sanderson (2015).

In papilionoid legumes, the contrast in species numbers between clades with and without

keel flowers motivated our investigation of this phenomenon using comparative methods.

The best-supported MiSSE model from our results was trait-free and thus indicated the

limited influence of floral architecture on diversification at a global scale. This lack of

support for SSE models is likely a conservative conclusion given our taxon sampling (ca. 15%

across Fabales) because larger, older, and less well-sampled phylogenies tended to support

trait-dependent models (Helmstetter *et al.*, 2023). The orders-of-magnitude difference in

net diversification rate estimated by the HiSSE model was driven by a handful keel-

flowered lineages including the well-characterized radiations in *Lupinus* and *Astragalus*

(Fig. 2 a, d). Yet even in these two genera, additional extrinsic and intrinsic factors such as

perennial life history and invasion of montane ecosystems have been demonstrated to

promote speciation (Drummond *et al.*, 2012; Azani *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, a lack of

correlation between nodulation ability and net diversification rate was reported by

Afkhami *et al.* (2018) despite that nodulating legume genera contain three times more

species than non-nodulating ones. These results suggest that individual traits such as keel

flowers and nodulation are not the sole driver of diversification in papilionoids, but rather

constitute a broader confluence of factors that have additively contributed to lineage

diversification (Donoghue & Sanderson, 2015).

Indeed, the massive diversity of Fabaceae has been hypothesized to be an outcome of a

suite of intrinsic traits including nitrogen fixation symbiotically with soil bacteria (Sprent,

2001; Werner *et al.*, 2015; Doyle, 2016; Faria *et al.*, 2022), direct chemical defense with

alkaloids and canavanine (Bell, 1981; Bisby *et al.*, 1994; Kursar *et al.*, 2009; Wink, 2013),

indirect defense via ant domatia and extrafloral nectaries (Marazzi & Sanderson, 2010;

Chomicki & Renner, 2015; Marazzi *et al.*, 2019), and likely variation in fruit morphology

and seed dispersal mechanisms that have yet to be characterized (López *et al.*, 2000;

Herrera *et al.*, 2019). Besides, recurrent biome shifts and rapid colonization of novel

ecological niches also played a significant role in promoting diversification in Fabaceae.

Examples include the rapid radiation of the primarily herbaceous IRLC clade in temperate

regions (Wojciechowski *et al.*, 2004), the dominance of mimosoids in seasonally dry forests

(Pennington *et al.*, 2009; Ringelberg *et al.*, 2023), and the remarkable diversification of

Indigofereae in tropical fire-prone savannas (Schrire *et al.,* 2009). Finally, multiple whole

genome duplications taking place during early evolution of Fabaceae have also been

proposed to buffer mass extinction events and promote genetic and species diversity

(Koenen *et al.*, 2021; Zhao *et al.,* 2021). Some of these events left a clear signal in our BAMM

analysis (e.g., rate shift in mimosoids; node A Fig. 2a) that are uncorrelated with keel

morphology. In genera like *Senna, Lupinus*, and *Astragalus*, intrinsic (e.g., extrafloral

nectaries, perennial habit) and extrinsic factors (e.g., colonizing Andes) are closely linked

with each other to promote diversification (Azani *et al.*, 2019; Marazzi and Sanderson,

2010; Drummond *et al.*, 2012). Studies of Podalyrieae in the Cape region also concluded

that the interaction between fire-survival strategy and soil type preference simultaneously

contributed to its diversity (Schnitzler *et al.*, 2011). All of this evidence points to the

synnovation hypothesis as a more plausible explanation for radiations in Fabaceae.

In summary, while floral architecture may have played a role in the diversification of

papilionoid legumes, a combination of intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors were

synergistically involved to drive the remarkable diversification of Papilionoideae. This may

begin with the accumulation of genetic variation from the paleo genome duplication that

occurred along the stem lineage leading to papilionoids (Koenen *et al.*, 2021), combined

with the origin of nodulation within the clade (Doyle, 2016) and the shifts in floral

architecture to bilateral symmetry. Keel flowers may facilitate speciation by enhancing the

persistence of species, which might in turn increased the likelihood of experiencing

subsequent key innovation or range shifts that promote speciation. Alternatively, keel

flowers may represent a phylogenetic inertia for species-rich clades rather than being the

primary or casual factor per se of that drove diversification (Blomberg & Garland, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing upon insights from phylogenomics, divergence time estimation, and comparative

methods, we present novel insights into the early divergence history and floral evolution of

papilionoid legumes. With 1,456 low-copy nuclear loci, we confidently resolved the

recalcitrant relationships in Papilionoideae and inferred a Paleocene origin of keel flowers

at 59 Ma, predating the earliest fossil record by 3–4 million years. We identified at least six

independent origins and thirty-two losses of keel flowers across Fabales, with losses

predominantly taking place in the early diversification history of the papilionoids.

Ancestral Fabaceae thus likely displayed a more generalist pollination strategy, allowing

for greater floral flexibility over time. Although these independent gains and losses

coincide with the Miocene diversification of Papilionoideae, our results do not support

floral architecture as the sole driver of diversification in Fabaceae. Instead, a confluence of

intrinsic and extrinsic factors including nodulation, chemical defenses, and recurrent

dispersals into new biomes such as subtropical and temperate regions, likely contributed

synergistically to the diversification of papilionoids.

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reviewers, and Michael J. Sanderson have greatly improved the initial manuscript.

FIGURE LEGEND

Figure 1. Phylogeny of Papilionoideae based on low-copy nuclear gene sequences and
inferred from the multispecies coalescent model implemented in ASTRAL-III. Branch
supports indicate posterior probability from ASTRAL and bootstrap replicates support
from IQ-TREE, respectively. Only branches that are not maximally supported are labeled
with conflicting topologies marked by '–'. Pie charts on each node represent gene
concordance factors for the proportion of concordant (blue), discordant (green and pink),
and noninformative (grey) genes. The phylogram in the left margin illustrates branch

length in mutational units. The photos (by Domingos Cardoso, except *Pickeringia* by Martin
Wojciechowski, *Grazielodendron* by Claudio Nicoletti, *Baphia* by Warren McCleland
(iNaturalist, https://www.inaturalist.org/photos/108404418), *Hypocalyptus* by Brian du
Preez (iNaturalist, https://www.inaturalist.org/photos/60072646), *Mirbelia* by Nina Kerr
(iNaturalist, https://www.inaturalist.org/photos/345474574), *Pisum* by Michela Papa
(iNaturalist, https://inaturalist.ca/photos/372960709), and *Psoralea* by katrivier
(iNaturalist, https://inaturalist.ca/photos/262747553) illustrate the remarkable diversity
of floral architecture within the Papilionoideae.
865

Figure 2. Rate heterogeneity in the diversification of Fabales. (a) Time-calibrated tree of
Fabales species based on plastid *matK* gene sequences. Branch colors show net
diversification rates inferred from BAMM. Circles at nodes refer to clades with significant
rate shifts, which approximately align with the mimosoids (A),
Swartzia+Bocoa+Candolleodendron (B), Genisteae (C), *Lupinus* (D), NPAAA clade (E), IR-
lacking clade (F), Vicioid clade (G), *Astragalus* (H), Diocleae (I),
Cajaninae+Desmodieae+Phaseolinae+Erythrininae+Psoraleeae in addition to several other
smaller lineages (J), Psoraleeae (K), and Phaseolinae (L). Purple lines in the inner most ring
indicate the presence of keel flowers. The middle ring represents net diversification rates
at the tip estimated from the MiSSE model with 21 hidden states. Warmer colors are
suggestive of higher rates. Fabaceae taxonomic groups including Cercidoideae,
Detarioideae, Caesalpinioideae, and Papilionoideae are identified in the outer ring. (b)
Rate-through-time plot showing increased net diversification over time. The black line
represents the average across the whole tree; the gray lines represent the rate through
time on parts of the tree where significant rate shifts were identified. Shaded regions
represent 95% confidence intervals. (c) Posterior distribution of the number of rate shifts
inferred using BAMM. (d) Variation in tip-specific diversification rates for keel-flowered
and non-keel-flowered lineages based on BAMM estimate. (e) MiSSE-based tip
diversification rates for keel-flowered and non-keel-flowered lineages. All rates are relative
and only allow us to look at relative differences between biome preferences and parts of
the phylogeny. The photo by Janet Davis shows a *Bombus griseocollis* (De Geer, 1773) bee
on a *Baptisia australis* (L.) R.Br. flower.
888

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Supplementary figures

Figure S1 Histogram of the number of species per loci. The vertical line represents the 30%

missing data threshold to select the 1,456 loci in this study.

Figure S2 Topological congruences and conflicts of Papilionoideae phylogeny inferred

from IQTREE (left) and ASTRAL (right). Tangled grey lines indicate conflicting

relationships. Branch supports represent nonparametric bootstrap replicates values from

IQ-TREE and local posterior probability from ASTRAL, respectively. Only branches that are
not maximally supported are labeled.

Figure S3 Quantification of phylogenetic signal from individual genes. The two alternative
placements of the focal clades are illustrated with red or blue, with the red topology being
favored by the concatenation analysis. Genes are ordered in descending order based on
their support for the red topology. Differences in the log-likelihood scores (ΔlogL) between
these two topologies are calculated for individual genes (left) or the concatenated matrix
(right). Panels A-E represent five contentious relationships within Papilionoideae defined
in Table S3.

Figure S4 Bayesian inference of divergence time in Fabaceae based on 30 top clock-like
loci. Divergence time is shown in millions of years ago (Ma) and the blue bars represent 95%
credibility intervals. Eleven fossil calibration points including a constraint for the root age
are marked by numbered stars. See Table S5 for a full list of fossils and references.

Figure S5 Ancestral character reconstruction of keel flowers in Fabales inferred under the
marginal reconstruction algorithm in HiSSE. An ultrametric tree of 3,326 Fabales species is
inferred from *matK* sequences with branch lengths drawn in proportion to divergence time.
Solid and hollow branches indicate the presence and absence of keel flowers, respectively.
Events of keel flower gains and losses are marked by orange and magenta circles on the
branch, respectively. See Table S11 for age estimations of these events.

Supplementary Tables
Table S1 Voucher information and gene assembly information of 79 newly sequenced
species in this study. Species name, lineage affiliation, assembly quality, SRA accession
number, and voucher information including collection locality are provided.

Table S2 Species name, lineage affiliation, and number of sampled genes from 208 species
from Zhao *et al.* (2021).

Table S3 Testing alternative phylogenetic placement of Papilionoideae clades under the
maximum likelihood framework for concatenated DNA sequences.
930
931   **Table S4** List of top 30 clock-like genes with quantified root-to-tip branch length variation,
932   total tree length, and topological similarity to the species tree measured by bipartition
933   score.
934
935   **Table S5** Fossil calibration points for divergence time estimation.
936
937   **Table S6** Time tree, GenBank ID, and keel flower trait status for the 3,326 Fabales species
938   from the *matK* dataset. Numbers on the phylogeny are divergence time estimation for each
939   node based on treePL.
940
941   **Table S7** Secondary calibration points for the treePL analysis. All node ages in million
942   years ago (Ma) are derived from the BEAST time tree and are fixed in treePL. Nodes are
943   defined by the most recent common ancestor of two species indicated in the spreadsheet.
944
945   **Table S8** Genus level sampling ratio for Fabaceae. The number of species for each genus
946   was obtained using the powoGenera function from the R package expowo based on the
947   Plants of the World Online database (https://powo.science.kew.org). The species sampling
948   percentage was summarized for each genus and presented along with the URL address
949   from which the POWO data was derived.
950
Table S9 Taxon sampling and model parameters for the 11 diversification rate estimation
analyses. We used two sets of time-calibrated phylogenies that include either all Fabales or
Papilionoideae species only. The BiSSE, HiSSE, CID-2, CID-4, and MiSSE models variously
allow for the rate parameters between keel/non-keel states and hidden states to differ.
BiSSE, HiSSE, CID-2, and CID-4 models further varied in the number of hidden states
between zero and four. The optimum number of MiSSE was determined using the
MiSSEGreedy() function based on AIC scores.
958

959   **Table S10** Nuclear genome sequencing coverage of 32 whole genome sequencing datasets
960   estimated based on 21-mer frequency distribution. See Table S1 for the species name of
961   each ID.
962
Table S11 Summary of independent origins and losses of keel flower in Fabales. Binary
ancestral state reconstruction is inferred under the marginal reconstruction algorithm in
HiSSE. The timing of these events is determined by the crown group age of involved clades.
The precise age of events involving a single species cannot be determined using available
data. Therefore, the age of these events is represented by a range from present to their
stem group age.
969
Supplementary Data
Data S1 DNA alignments and maximum likelihood phylogenies inferred for the 1,456 low-
copy nuclear genes used in this study. The alignments are inferred using the MAFFT-linsi
algorithm. The gene trees are reconstructed using IQTREE and branch support is evaluated
with 1000 ultrafast bootstrap replication. Species names and their corresponding ID are
provided in sp_ID.csv. The list of 672 loci used to generate the concatenated matrix for
species tree estimation is provided in G672_len900_sp227.list. Data is available at the
Figshare Digital Repository (DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.27135984).
978
979   **Data S2** Distribution of 21-mer frequency in 32 species with low-pass genome sequencing
980   data. The 21-mer frequency is inferred from Jellyfish v2.3.0 to estimate sequencing
981   coverage.
982
983   **Data S3** Gene and site concordance factors of the Papilionoideae phylogeny. The species
984   tree and concatenated alignment of the 672-gene dataset were used as inputs in IQ-TREE to
985   calculate these concordance factors.
986
987   **COMPETING INTERESTS**
988   None declared.
989

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conception and experimental design, LC, DC, I-SC, RKJ, TAR, MFW. Acquisition of funds, RKJ,

TAR, MFW. Field collections, I-SC, DC, HCL, LPQ, RKJ, TAR, MFW. Nucleic acid isolation, I-SC,

CL, TAR. RNA isolations, TAR. Transcriptome and genome assembly, CL, LT, BS, LC. DNA

alignments and phylogenetic analyses, LC, I-SC, DC, MFW. Data interpretation, LC, I-SC, DC,

MFW. Production of figures and tables, LC, DC. Writing the initial draft of the manuscript,

LC, DC, MFW, TAR, RKJ. All authors revised and approved the final version of the

manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The raw sequence data generated and analyzed during this study are available in the NCBI

GenBank repository under Bioproject PRJNA1120003. The alignment data supporting the

findings of this study are available as supplementary data and have been deposited in the

Figshare Digital Repository (DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.27135984). The multi-locus

phylogeny of Papilionoideae and the dated *matK* phylogeny of Fabales are available on the

Open Tree of Life (https://tree.opentreeoflife.org/curator/study/view/ot_2372). The code

used for data processing and analysis is openly available on GitHub at

https://github.com/lmcai/Papilionoideae_phylogenomics.

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(a)

CAESALPINIOIDEAE

DETARIOIDEAE

CERC.

POLYGALACEAE

PAPILIONOIDEAE

Floral architecture
(tip points)

non-keel

keel

MiSSE tip rate

0.4
0.3
0.2
0.1

Net diversification
(branch colours)

Fast

Slow

125 Ma   100   75   50   25

Cretaceous | Pal | Eocene | Oligo | Miocene | Pli

(b)

Net diversification rate

Relative time

(c)

Probability

Number of shifts

(d)

BAMM net diversification rate

Floral architecture

non-keel   keel

(e)

MiSSE tip rate

Floral architecture

non-keel   keel