Disclosure

of things evolutionists don't want you to know

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Biogeography

Some people think that the distribution of plants and animals is an argument in favor of evolution, but they are wrong.

Before we address the merits of the biogeography argument, you should realize that the argument itself is irrelevant. The biogeography argument isn't an argument in favor of evolution—it's an argument against the Bible. Even if the argument is true, proving the Bible is false doesn't prove that evolution is true. Proving the Bible is false doesn't prove Buddhism is true. Proving something is false doesn't prove something else is true.

While we are on the subject, let us emphasize that proving evolution is false doesn't prove the Bible is true. That's why we never make that claim. Some people who send us hate mail incorrectly assume that we do. They ask, "If evolution isn't true, then what is your alternative?"

No Alternative

We have no alternative, and we don't need one. Let's illustrate why not with a fictional example.

Suppose you were falsely accused of killing someone in Chicago on September 18, 1990. The evidence against you is the testimony of four eye witnesses who swear they saw someone who looks exactly like you shoot the victim in cold blood at short range. In fact, you were actually in India helping Mother Teresa feed the poor that day. At the trial your attorney enters into evidence your passport, showing that you entered India on September 1, 1990, and left India on September 27, 1990. Not only that, the September 19 issue of a prominent Indian newspaper had a picture on the front page showing Mother Teresa handing out food on September 18, and you are clearly visible in the picture standing right next to her. Furthermore, the U.S. Ambassador to India testifies in court that he was with you on September 18 at the time the picture was taken.

You have an airtight case proving that you were not responsible for the murder. The prosecutor would not say, "If you didn't kill the victim, who did?" American courts do not require that you prove someone else committed the crime. You do not need to suggest an alternative to prove you aren't responsible.

We simply present evidence against evolution, showing that evolution could not be responsible for the origin and diversity of life on Earth. We do not need to prove, or even suggest, any other explanation.

When evaluating a scientific theory, the proper procedure is to examine all the evidence for and against the theory, then make a decision. When the theory of evolution is evaluated this way, it falls short. That's why evolutionists always try to bring religion or politics into the picture to obscure the scientific issues.

The Argument

The biogeography argument really boils down to this: Kangaroos could not have gotten from Noah's ark to Australia. Therefore, the Bible is false, which means evolution must be true. When we state the argument that way, it is so silly that no rational individual would give it a second thought. So, evolutionists disguise it as best they can. To be fair, we will let them present the argument in their own words.

The only reason we are even writing about this stupid argument is because we didn't have space to address Wowbagger's assertion in last month's newsletter. [1] Here's what he said:

> **Part 4: The Competition**
> 4A. Can your theory explain why the

[1] *Disclosure,* August 2009, "Unanswerable Questions"

> present distribution of plant and animals in the world came about, the way it is? Why are tomatoes and potatoes only native to the Americas, for example? Why are monotremes and a few placental [he no doubt means, "marsupial"] mammals restricted to Australia? Why could they not have been distributed anywhere else? [2]

There are two points we want to make. The first we have already made. He is trying to establish the truth of evolution by proving that "the competition" (which in his email is Intelligent Design) is false. That isn't a valid way of proving evolution is true.

The second point is that he is using the distribution of plants and animals as an argument against Intelligent Design because he incorrectly thinks that Intelligent Design is just creationism in disguise.

Intelligent Design simply says that life can be explained by conscious design and can't be explained by random chance filtered by natural selection. Therefore, there must have been an intelligent process, not necessarily the God of Abraham, to explain the existence of life. Since the postulated creator is not the Biblical god, the story of Noah's ark is irrelevant. The unknown intelligent designer could very well have created life all over the Earth at various times in various places. The intelligent designer might have created marsupial animals in Australia.

Wowbagger's question is based on invalid logic and a misunderstanding of Intelligent Design. Wowbagger misunderstands Intelligent Design because evolutionists have censored discussion of ID from the science curriculum. If not for that censorship, he would not have asked the stupid question.

A More Credible Evolutionist

Wowbagger isn't exactly a world famous authority on evolution, so it would be unfair of us to use him as a straw man. So, instead, let's quote from a book written by a noted evolutionist that received rave reviews from the evolutionary community.

> Why were nearly all of Australia's native mammals marsupials, while placental mammals dominated the rest of the world? And if species were created, why did the creator stock distant areas having similar terrain and climate, like the deserts of Africa and of the Americas, with species that were superficially similar in form but showed other, more fundamental differences? … The biogeographic evidence for evolution is now so powerful that I have never seen a creationist book, article, or lecture that has tried to refute it. Creationists simply pretend the evidence doesn't exist.
>
> Ironically, the roots of biogeography lie deep in religion. The earliest "natural theologians" tried to show how the distribution of organisms could be reconciled with the account of Noah's Ark in the Bible. All living animals were understood as the descendants of the pairs that Noah took aboard, pairs that traveled to their present locations from the Ark's postflood resting place (traditionally near Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey). But this explanation had obvious problems. How did kangaroos and giant earthworms make their way across the oceans to their present home in Australia? [3]

As we pointed out in our two-part review of this book [4], Coyne doesn't really produce any real evidence that evolution is true. He simply argues, over and over again, that the Bible is false, so evolution must be true. We didn't cite this particular example in either of those two previous articles because it would have been overkill.

Coyne thinks that if the Bible were true, then plant and animal life would not be distributed over the world in the way we find them today. For example,

> The most famous example of different species filling similar roles involves the marsupial mammals, now found mainly in Australia (the Virginia opossum is a familiar exception), and placental mammals, which predominate elsewhere in the world. The two groups show important anatomical differences, most notably in the reproductive systems (almost all marsupials have pouches and give birth to very undeveloped young, while placentals have placentas that enable young to be born at a more advanced stage). Nevertheless, in other ways some marsupials and placentals are astonishingly similar. There are burrowing marsupial moles that look and act just like placental moles, marsupial mice that resemble placental mice, the marsupial sugar glider, which glides from tree to tree just like a flying squirrel, and marsupial anteaters, which do exactly what South American anteaters do (figure 20). [5]

Let's look at the facts Coyne presents from an evolutionary perspective. The evolutionary assumption is that the mammal line split into

[2] http://debatenation.com/forums/showthread.php?t=687

[3] Jerry Coyne, Why Evolution is True, 2009, pages 88-89

[4] *Disclosure*, April 2009, "Why Evolution is True" and *Disclosure*, May 2009, "Why Evolution is False"

[5] Jerry Coyne, Why Evolution is True, 2009, page 92

placental mammals and marsupial mammals at some time in the distant past. All modern placental mammals evolved from a placental ancestor, and all modern marsupial mammals evolved from a marsupial ancestor.

When evolutionists (like Wowbagger) present this argument, they usually leave it to the victim to assume that the first marsupial mammal evolved in Australia because that's where you find modern kangaroos and other less-familiar (to Americans) pouched animals. Since Australia is surrounded by water, one might assume the marsupials could not have gotten off the island. Evolutionists don't really believe marsupials evolved first in Australia but they might "forget" to mention this to make their argument seem stronger than it actually is.

The obvious problem with this erroneous assumption is the Virginia opossum. Somehow it got to North America. If it is possible for opossums to migrate north from Australia, it is certainly possible that other animals migrated south to Australia. The Great Barrier Reef might not be such a great barrier after all! ☺

The bigger problem for evolutionists is that there are placental mice and marsupial mice, placental flying squirrels and marsupial flying squirrels, placental anteaters and marsupial anteaters, *etc*. From an evolutionary point of view, there can be only two explanations, both of which stagger the imagination. Whether they choose Door Number 1, or Door Number 2, it leads them to big problems. Let's open Door Number 1 first.

Door Number 1

The first explanation is so absurd that we know of no credible evolutionist who endorses it. The first explanation is that marsupial reproduction evolved multiple times. That is, mice evolved pouches, flying squirrels evolved pouches, anteaters evolved pouches, and so on. The thought of a placental reproductive system evolving into a marsupial reproductive system even once is mind-boggling. To think that it happened multiple times is simply unfathomable, even for the most gullible evolutionist.

Maybe we should not gloss over this so lightly. Give some serious thought to what would have to happen for a marsupial human to evolve. The woman would conceive in the usual way, but she would deliver the fetus in perhaps the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. The fetus would instinctively crawl from the uterus into a pouch on the mother's abdomen. This pouch would have developed from some fold of skin that arose accidentally (perhaps from drinking too much beer ☺), and the woman's nipples would have migrated down from her chest to her lower body, and been covered by this flap of skin. There would also have to have been some sort of hormonal change that would cause the pregnancy to shorten, and lactation to begin early.

It is not reasonable to believe that marsupial humans will evolve at any time in the future, so why would a reasonable person believe marsupial animals could have evolved in the past? The evolutionists' only answer is that even though it defies rational explanation, it must have happened because marsupial mammals evolved.

This revolutionary change to mammalian reproduction is so incredible that no amount of brainwashing could force students to believe that could happen multiple times. That leaves evolutionists with a second explanation as the only other option. Let's see if you like what is hidden behind Door Number 2.

Door Number 2

The second explanation is that an ancient placental mammal evolved the marsupial reproductive system. That unknown missing link between placental mammals and marsupial mammals evolved into marsupial mice, marsupial flying squirrels, and marsupial anteaters that look exactly like placental mice, flying squirrels, and anteaters. What a coincidence!

Oh, but it wasn't a coincidence! The environment made them do it! ☺ Somehow similar environmental pressures in Australia and South America caused two different kinds of mammals to evolve into anteaters that are identical in every way, except reproduction.

This placental/marsupial situation isn't the only instance of two clearly unrelated creatures looking alike. Whenever this happens, evolutionists call this "convergent evolution." Two unrelated animals supposedly converge on the same solution to an environmental problem, and wind up looking very similar, even though DNA analysis shows they aren't related in the way that one would assume just by looking at them. The reason they call it "convergent evolution" is because that term sounds more scientific than "dumb luck" or "who-the-heck-knows" or "yet another unsolved evolutionary riddle." So, whenever you hear an evolutionist say something is the result of convergent evolution, you should realize it means that it makes no sense from an evolutionary perspective, and they haven't got a clue how it happened.

Deserts

Coyne's quote mentioned desert plant and animal life. I've lived and worked just outside Death Valley in the Mojave Desert (in California)

for nearly 40 years, and I've visited the Sonora Desert (in neighboring Arizona) on multiple occasions. Coyne is correct when he says that the climate and terrain are similar, but the plant and animal life is different. If you blindfolded me and dropped me in either desert I could immediately tell you which desert it was just by looking at the plants and animals there.

The books say that Joshua trees grow from 2,000 to 6,000 feet, so there must be some places where they can be found that low or that high. Around here, if you are surrounded by Joshua trees, you must be between 4,000 and 5,000 feet. Just drive that little section of California 178 from its southern junction with Highway 14 west to Walker Pass and you will see what I mean. The junction of 178 and 14 is at 3,000 feet elevation, and there isn't a Joshua tree in sight. You start driving west, up the hill, and all of a sudden, right by the 4,000 foot marker, there are Joshua trees everywhere. They continue to grow all the way up to Walker Pass (5,280 feet). The only noticeable difference along the road is the abundance (or absence) of Joshua trees.

Here's the scientific observation: Very slight changes in the environment (altitude, temperature, rainfall, *etc*.) can have a significant effect on whether or not Joshua trees will grow there. That's an observable, scientific fact.

This fact doesn't just apply to Joshua trees. Even though our desert isn't much different from Arizona's, saguaro cacti grow in the Sonora desert but not here. Why not? I don't know. (No doubt someone will email me with the answer. Thanks in advance.) Regardless, the point is that some life forms are more sensitive to trivial (to us) differences in the environment than other life forms are. That's why some things grow in one place but not another similar place. It is an easily observed fact.

Colonization

The other part of the biogeography argument has to do with the perceived difficulty of life colonizing new areas. In this respect, creationists and evolutionists share a common problem. If it is hard for kangaroos to get from Turkey to Australia, then it should be equally difficult for humans to get from North Africa to Australia. The solution that *National Geographic* proposed this month for the human migration problem works equally as well for creationists.

In case you missed it, this month's *National Geographic* has a short article [6] summarizing their program, *The Human Family Tree*, which aired on the National Geographic Channel on August 30, 2009. The program is based on the Genographic Project, which analyzed the DNA of 193 volunteers accosted one afternoon in Queens, New York, ostensibly to attempt to determine prehistoric migration patterns.

The two not-so-hidden agendas of the program were to promote the Out-of-Africa hypothesis over the Multiple Origins hypothesis (an ongoing disagreement between evolutionary factions), as well as a racial agenda. (One clearly black man was singled out as being more genetically European than African, to advance the notion that "race doesn't exist.") The fact that the closing credits give "special thanks" to the Gaia Acta Community suggests a third agenda as well.

If a Christian group had sponsored the program, they would have moved the starting point just a little bit farther north to Turkey, and could have used the very same data to prove that all humans are descended from three couples that got off Noah's ark. Politics and religion aside, the program rather neatly dismissed the difficulties of human migration to the farthest corners of the world. If aborigines could get to Australia from Ethiopia or Turkey, then kangaroos could, too.

Coyne's Example

Coyne argues that biogeography is proof of evolution using marsupials as a case study. It consists of a few facts (not all of which are correct) glued together by a lot of speculation. Here is what he says:

> The earliest marsupial fossils, around 80 million years old, are found not in Australia, but in North America. As marsupials evolved, they spread southward, reaching what is now the tip of South America about 40 million years ago. Marsupials made it to Australia roughly 10 million years later, where they began diversifying into the two-hundred-odd species that live there today.
>
> But how could they cross the South Atlantic? The answer is that it didn't yet exist. At the time of the marsupial invasion, South America and Australia were joined as part of the southern supercontinent of Gondwana. This landmass had already begun to break apart, unzipping to form the Atlantic Ocean, but the tip of South America was still connected to what is now Antarctica, which in turn was connected to what is now Australia (see figure 21). Since marsupials had to go overland from South America to Australia, they must have passed through Antarctica. So we can predict this: there should be fossil marsupials on Antarctica dating somewhere between 30 and 40 million years ago.

[6] *National Geographic*, September 2009, "From Africa to Astoria by way of everywhere", pages 24 - 26

> This hypothesis was strong enough to drive scientists to Antarctica looking for marsupial fossils. And, sure enough, they found them: more than a dozen species of marsupials (recognized by their distinctive teeth and jaws) unearthed on Seymour Island, off the Antarctic Peninsula. This area is right on the ancient ice-free pathway between South America and Antarctica. And the fossils are just the right age: 35 to 40 million years old. After a find in 1982, the polar paleontologist William Zinsmeister was exultant: "For years and years people thought marsupials had to be there. This ties together all the suppositions made about Antarctica. The things we found are what you'd expect we would have." [7]

First of all, let's get something straight. When he talks about marsupial fossils found in North America, he isn't talking about fossil kangaroo skeletons. He is talking about teeth that are similar to modern marsupial teeth. The teeth experts would like you to believe that they can tell just about everything about a creature from its teeth, but they really blew it when they mistook a pig's tooth for Nebraska Man.

The thing that makes marsupial animals (opossums and kangaroos) different from placental mammals (horses, cows, and people) is that placental animals bear live young that are mature enough that they don't have to be protected in a pouch immediately after they are born. Therefore, the only iron-clad evidence that a creature is a marsupial is the existence of a pouch. Since pouches don't fossilize very well, it is unlikely that anyone will ever find a fossil of an unknown creature that is unquestionably a marsupial. Scientists who claim to find fossil marsupials assume that the animal in question is a marsupial based on teeth. You have to take their word for it.

Bias and funding can influence interpretation. If one goes to Antarctica looking for teeth that might belong to a marsupial, there is a good chance that any teeth you find will have some characteristics in common with marsupial teeth. Those characteristics might (consciously or subconsciously) seem to be the most important characteristics used to classify the fossil. Furthermore, if one is working on a research grant that is attempting to find evidence that marsupials existed in a certain location at a certain time, one might not try to hard to find reasons why the teeth in question did not come from a marsupial. Perhaps it is a pareidolia phenomenon! ☺ [8]

[7] Jerry Coyne, Why Evolution is True, 2009, pages 94-95

[8] *Disclosure*, September 2009, "Pareidolia Phenomena"

Coyne quoted the polar paleontologist William Zinsmeister as saying, "For years and years people thought marsupials had to be there. This ties together all the suppositions made about Antarctica. The things we found are what you'd expect we would have." Let's put the shoe on the other foot. Suppose a creationist said, "For years and years creationists thought the Earth was much warmer before the flood, so even marsupials lived in Antarctica. This ties together all the suppositions made about Antarctica. The things we found are what you'd expect we would have." What would evolutionists say if creationists discovered marsupial fossils in "pre-flood" sedimentary rock layers in Antarctica? They would undoubtedly say that the creationists' bias caused them to interpret the fossils in such a way as to support their admittedly pre-conceived notions.

The discovery of these fossils is not a testable prediction of evolution because it is also a testable prediction of creationism. The fact is that something that had teeth died some time ago in Antarctica. Everything else is speculation.

But what about the age of the fossils? Coyne says the dates of the fossils show that marsupials originated first in North America 80 million years ago, and migrated through South America and Antarctica to Australia in subsequent time periods.

What if someone found older fossil marsupials someplace else, like Asia perhaps? Wouldn't that disprove the "fact" that marsupials originated in North America?

Older Marsupial Fossils

Coyne wrote in 2009 that the oldest marsupial fossils (80 million years old) were found in North America, apparently ignoring this announcement of older fossils published more than five years ago.

> The origin and diversification of the three main groups of mammals (marsupials, placentals, and monotremes) prior to the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary have been difficult to discern with certainty because many early mammals are represented only by a few teeth or jaw fragments. Luo *et al*. (p. 1934; see the Perspective by Cifelli and Davis) now present a nearly complete skeleton of an early metatherian, *Sinodelphys*, an early ancestor of the marsupials from the Yixian Formation, China, that dates to about 125 million years ago. In contrast, marsupials are mainly extant in the Southern Hemisphere today (the exception being recent migrants to the Northern Hemisphere). The foot of the fossil implies that the animal climbed or lived in trees. This finding, taken together with other fossil

evidence from this area, suggests that Asia was a center for diversification of mammals. [9]

The perspective by Cifelli and Davis in that same issue of *Science* said,

> Living marsupials are restricted to Australia and South America (which were part of the supercontinent of Gondwana); North American opossums are recent immigrants to the continent. In contrast, metatherian fossils from the Late Cretaceous [HN3] are exclusively from Eurasia and North America (which formed the supercontinent Laurasia) [HN4]. This geographical switch remains unexplained. The timing of the split between eutherians and metatherians is also controversial. To date, the geological record has yielded few fossils that bear directly on the origin of marsupials. [10]

Opossums are "recent immigrants?" So, after marsupials originated in North America, they went to Australia via South America and Antarctica, and then somehow came back to North America? And we are supposed to believe this despite the fact that there are few relevant fossils?

Both of these articles were commentaries on a six-page article (including excellent photographs) describing a nearly complete skeleton, in which the discoverers said,

> Derived features of a new boreosphenidan mammal from the Lower Cretaceous Yixian Formation of China suggest that it has a closer relationship to metatherians (including extant marsupials) than to eutherians (including extant placentals). [11]

How did Coyne miss this when he was researching material for his treatise on how biogeography proves evolution? The journal *Science* isn't exactly an obscure publication. Furthermore, the discovery wasn't just reported in *Science*. It was reported in *Science Daily*, too.

> Prior to the discovery of *Sinodelphys*, the previously earliest metatherian fossils were some isolated teeth from the 110 million year old sediments of North America. The oldest jaw fragments of metatherians were from deposits of Uzbekistan 90 million years in age. The previously oldest skeletal fossil is from Mongolia and is 75 million years in age. [12]

This is getting really confusing, so let's summarize it. Coyne says that the oldest marsupial fossils in North America were 80 million years old, but *Science Daily*, working from materials provided by Carnegie Museum of Natural History, said that the oldest metatherian (and that includes marsupial) fossil teeth are 110 million years old, and there are 90-million-year-old jaw fragments from Uzbekistan (in the southwestern part of the former Soviet Union) and bones from a 75-million-year-old marsupial in Mongolia. How does this all fit into Coyne's theory? It doesn't, really.

Suppose it is True

We aren't convinced that the fossils in question actually are marsupial fossils, but let's suppose they are. We certainly don't believe the dates assigned to them, but just for the sake of discussion, let's pretend they are correct. If what the paleontologists say about the fossils is true, what could we conclude?

One might conclude that marsupials lived only in North America 110 million years ago. There were no marsupials anywhere else in the world at that time. Twenty million years later, all the marsupials in the world migrated to Uzbekistan. There weren't any marsupials anywhere else. Fifteen million years after that, all the marsupials migrated to Mongolia, and went extinct everywhere else in the world. Finally, they all migrated to Australia, where they are today. Therefore, all the marsupials in the world only existed on one continent at any given time.

One might draw that foolish conclusion, but probably not. The obvious flaw in that reasoning is that we almost certainly have not found all the marsupial fossils there are to find. Someone might find fossils in North America that paleontologists might date to be as young as 50 million years old. Someone might find fossils in Mongolia that date to 150 million years old. There could be undiscovered younger and older marsupial fossils all over the world.

As soon as evolutionists start down that slippery slope, Coyne's argument slides into a crevasse from which there is no climbing back out. His theory is tied to specific locations at specific times. If marsupials lived all over the world until just recently, then there is no evidence of migration or evolution.

Back to Square One

Now that Coyne has led us on a wild kangaroo chase, let's get back to the problems that biogeography poses for both creationists and

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[9] *Science*, 12 December 2003, "This Week in *Science*", p. 1857

[10] Cifelli and Davis, *Science*, 12 December 2003, "Marsupial Origins", pp. 1899 - 1900

[11] Zhe-Xi Luo, *et al*., *Science*, 12 December 2003, "An Early Cretaceous Tribosphenic Mammal and Metatherian Evolution", pp. 1934 - 1940

[12] http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2003/12/031212080417.htm

evolutionists. Namely, how does life spread across the planet, and how long does it take?

Creationists and evolutionists agree that life does expand into ecological niches that are most comfortable for that life form. They agree that living things exhibit at least a certain amount of variability which allows them to adapt, within limits, to the environment. They agree that, at various times in the past, the environment has changed sufficiently that some things living in a particular location have either migrated or gone extinct in that location. They agree that there are a lot of things that have not had sufficient ability to adapt, and have gone totally extinct.

The only real point of contention between creationists and evolutionists is how long it takes for living things to colonize a new area. Evolutionists think it must be hard for life to colonize a new area, and therefore must take a very long time. Certainly it must take longer than the roughly 4,000 years that creationists believe have passed since all the animals got off Noah's ark. How can we know how long it takes? Here's where real science comes in.

Real Science

One might imagine it takes a long time for an ecological system to develop. But real science is not based on imagination. Real science is based on careful observation.

Creationists love to point to the ecological recovery of Mount St. Helens, which erupted on May 18, 1980, annihilating almost all life in the neighboring vicinity. Anyone who happens to be near there can go there and see for themselves how quickly the ecology has recovered.

But as devastating as the eruption was, it did not destroy all life. Furthermore, it is easy to get to Mount St. Helens. Therefore, the fact that the ecosystem has essentially recovered in 30 years is no real surprise. It isn't identical to what it was before; but if you hadn't been there before 1980, you would not know that. You might think there had been a forest fire there about 100 years ago.

Mount St. Helens recovered very quickly; but since not all life was destroyed, and it is easy for all kinds of life to get there, it isn't compelling evidence.

Surtsey, Iceland

A better place to make observations is the island of Surtsey. Unfortunately, you can't go there to see it for yourself. It's off-limits to tourists. It's the exclusive domain of scientists studying how long it takes an ecosystem to develop.

> The island has been protected since its birth, providing the world with a pristine natural laboratory. Free from human interference, Surtsey has been producing unique long-term information on the colonisation process of new land by plant and animal life. [13]

Since you can't go there, your best bet is to search the web. Perhaps the best web site is the Surtsey Research Society's web site (http://www.surtsey.is/index_eng.htm). Here's a brief summary of Surtsey's short history from various web sites (some of which were written by people whose native language clearly is not English).

> Located at 63º18' N - 20º36'W, Surtsey is the southernmost of the Westman Islands archipelago off Iceland's south coast. Named after Surtur, the fire giant from Norse mythology, the island was created during a volcanic eruption that began November 14, 1963. [14]
>
> In June 1967 stopped the eruption on Surtsey. The size of the island was 2,8 square kilometer on that time, the length was 2100 meter and the width was 1500. The height was 169 meter. Two parts of three on the island consists of volcano ash, the other part is lava. Water and heat that is still on the island has changed a part of the loose ash to a kind of hard glass looking rock called palagonit. This was a double surprise for many geologists. [15]
>
> In the summer of 1965 the first vascular plant was found growing on Surtsey, mosses became visible in 1968 and lichens were first found on the Surtsey lava in 1970. Plant colonization on Surtsey has been closely studied, the vascular plants in particular as they have been of far greater significance than mosses and lichens in the vegetation development. [16]
>
> In the summer of 1964 both flies and butterflies had arrived, and gulls had for a long time put their feet on the cliffs, like many other migrating birds, happy to have found a resting place after their journey from southern countries. The first vascular plants was to be found in june 1965, and at the same time the first seals were observed on the beaches. [17]

The closest I've ever been to Surtsey is Vestmannaeyjar, which is about 20 km (about 12

[13] http://www.surtsey.is/index_eng.htm
[14] http://icelandreview.com/features/nature_and_travel/?ew_news_onlyarea=&ew_news_onlyposition=10&cat_id=16568&ew_10_a_id=310849
[15] http://www.vulkaner.no/v/volcan/surtsey_e.html
[16] http://www.vulkaner.no/n/surtsey/esurtplant.html
[17] http://www.vulkaner.no/v/volcan/surtsey_e.html

or 13 miles) away. Vestmannaeyjar is of unknown age. But the pictures I've seen of Surtsey are so similar to what I saw on Vestmannaeyjar that I probably could not tell upon which island they were taken. In less than 50 years Surtsey has developed an old-looking ecological system.

Scientists are trying to replicate natural ecological development by keeping the process pure. That means no human interference. But human interference is natural. They need look no farther than Iceland itself, where beautiful little Icelandic horses grace the landscape. How did those little horses get there? They didn't cross a land bridge, and they certainly didn't swim to Iceland. We know they were brought there in the 9th and 10th centuries by Vikings.

The burros and wild horses that live here (near Death Valley) were brought by prospectors. Human transportation is a historically known way that plants and animals colonized new areas. People "naturally" bring plants and animals with them when they go places.

Going back to Wowbagger's question, why do tomatoes, potatoes, corn, tea, and coffee grow where they do? Because people planted them there! It isn't a big mystery.

Thanks and Apologies

We are sorry that this essay is so long, making our six-page newsletter ten pages this month. We thank you for taking the time to read the whole article. Since this article is so long, you may have forgotten how it began, and all the points along the way. So, here is a quick look back at where we've been.

The biogeography argument isn't an argument for evolution; it is an argument against the Noah's ark story. Disproving the Bible doesn't prove that Buddhism, evolution, or any other religious belief is correct.

Fossil evidence merely suggests that marsupials once lived all over the world, but are now mostly extinct everywhere except Australia. This finding is consistent with creation, Intelligent Design and evolution.

Life spreads rapidly and adapts quickly to new environments. The invasion of non-native species is well known, and can be a serious problem in some cases.

Simply put, biogeography doesn't prove or disprove evolution. Things blow, float, or are carried all over the world. They live where they flourish, and don't live where the environment isn't hospitable to them. It is as simple as that.

Email

Pareidolia Phenomena

Thanks to several loyal readers, we learned a new word!

Last month, when answering Wowbagger's "unanswerable questions" concerning Intelligent Design, we made an incorrect assumption, and are glad to correct it this month.

Wowbagger advanced the claim that deducing the existence of an Intelligent Designer was "nothing more than a type of paredolia [sic] phenomenon." Even if he had spelled pareidolia correctly, we would not have known what it meant. Our embarrassment is somewhat blunted by the fact that the word isn't in Microsoft Word's spelling dictionary, or even Merriam-Webster's on-line dictionary.[18]

Since the usual evolutionary argument is that science only deals with natural phenomena, and Intelligent Design postulates some sort of supernatural phenomena, we assumed that Wowbagger meant "paranormal," and answered the question accordingly. We were wrong.

Denise was the first to set us straight.

> I believe you made an error in interpreting one of the blogger's many errors:
>
> *2G. If I were to claim that the "deducing of an Intelligent Designer" was nothing more than a type of paredolia [sic] phenomenon, how could you demonstrate otherwise?*
>
> *We presume he means "paranormal phenomenon." We can only wonder what is going on in his head that would cause him to ask such a question.*
>
> I imagine he meant pareidolia, according to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia):
>
> "Pareidolia (pronounced /pæriˈdoʊliə/) is a psychological phenomenon involving a vague and random stimulus (often an image or sound) being perceived as significant. Common examples include seeing images of animals or faces in clouds, the man in the moon, and hearing hidden messages on records played in reverse. The word comes from the Greek para- ("beside", "with", or "alongside"—meaning, in this context, something faulty or wrong (as in paraphasia, disordered speech)) and eidolon ("image"; the diminutive of eidos ("image", "form", "shape")). Pareidolia is a type of apophenia."
>
> He's saying ID people see design not because it is really there but because they try to make sense of randomness, like seeing things in clouds. He's still wrong, but at

[18] http://www.merriam-webster.com/

least that question makes sense. ☺
Otherwise, another great newsletter.
Denise

We also heard from Kerry, who put it this way:

Greetings,
I believe question 2G is referring to the perception or recognition of religious images in everyday items.
The question might be phrased, if I were to claim that the "deducing of an Intelligent Designer" was similar to seeing an image of the Virgin Mary in a piece of toast, how could you demonstrate otherwise?
Kerry

Jasu, in Finland, also made a similar observation.

If Wowbagger knew anything about Intelligent Design, he would know about the "specified complexity" criteria. These criteria separate actual design from perceived design. Life satisfies these criteria, but images of Mary don't.

Perhaps the best example of pareidolia is finding a tooth and thinking it represents a missing human ancestor, or a marsupial. ☺

Evolution in the News

Scott's Advice

Eugenie Scott tells evolutionists how to promote the theory of evolution.

Eugenie C. Scott is the director of an organization dedicated to censoring the public school science curriculum (ironically called the National Center for Science **Education**). Last month *Science News* interviewed her, asking her about how the theory of evolution should be presented to the public.

Significantly, she DIDN'T say, "Since evolution is such a strong scientific theory, the best way to get people to accept it is to have an open and honest debate about it. When people have been given the chance to see all the evidence for and against evolution, they will clearly see that evolution is true." She didn't say that because that's the last thing she wants. The NCSE is just a political pressure group, so she gave a political answer.

> **What should scientists and people who care about science do?**
> I'm calling on scientists to be citizens. American education is decentralized. Which means it's politicized. To make a change ... you have to be a citizen who pays attention to local elections and votes [for] the right people. You can't just sit back and expect that the magnificence of science will reveal itself and everybody will ... accept the science. [19] [The inserted word "for" and both ellipses are part of the quote from *Science News.*]

When she says to vote for "the right people" in local school board elections, she means you should vote for people who will censor the science curriculum to prevent any honest discussion of evolution. She knows people won't "accept the science" because the science is against evolution.

Scott says, "American education is decentralized." That's only partly true. It isn't completely centralized, but it isn't completely decentralized, either. She regrets the fact that the Federal Government does not have absolute power to mandate the teaching of evolution without question all over the United States. But Federal courts certainly are telling local school districts that they can't even mention Intelligent Design as an alternative to evolution.

What makes this an important political issue is that if the Federal Government can mandate the teaching of only one side of a scientific issue, it sets an important precedent. If the Federal Government can determine what can be taught in public schools regarding evolution, then it can also determine what can be taught regarding global warming, homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, racism, religion, and who knows what else. Depending upon who the president is, children will be taught to believe (without question) that global warming is an impending danger that can only be thwarted by reducing energy usage or a hoax to gain power; homosexuality is normal or a disgusting perversion; *et cetera*.

If the controversy over evolution were really a scientific debate, then it would be decided on the basis of scientific evidence (and the theory of evolution would be rejected). But the theory of evolution is being used as a means to give the Federal Government the authority to determine what must be taught to school children. There is a lot at stake politically, which makes the controversy even more passionate.

You are permitted (even encouraged) to copy and distribute this newsletter.

You are also permitted (even encouraged) to send a donation of $15/year to Science Against Evolution, P.O. Box 923, Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0923, to help us in our work. ☺

[19] Scott, *Science News*, August 1, 2009, "Accept it: Talk about evolution needs to evolve", page 32

by Lothar Janetzko

Evolution Chat Transcript

http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/science/20071214-1400-evolutionchat.html

Why evolution matters

This month's web site review looks at a web site that is a chat transcript by the author of an article entitled "Why evolution matters" which appeared in November 2007 in the San Diego Union-Tribune. The chat transcript contains a link to the article. The article makes the claim that since the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded for efforts to elucidate and publicize climate change, that this topic is now an issue of scientific debate for many Americans. The complaint is then made that the American public "won't give the same support to evolution". This is quite a stretch in logic. You have to read the whole article to get some insight into why this scientist believes that evolution matters.

The article also points out that "scientists share some of the blame for the public's current confusion about evolution", and states that a program called Evolution Matters will address this problem.

The chat transcript itself begins by the moderator providing a detailed biographical sketch of Dr. Kay, the dean of UCSD's Division of Biological Sciences. Then the transcript continues as a series of questions and answers.

Many different topics are discussed in the questions and answers including 1) Lack of transitional forms, 2) DNA and RNA, 3) Micro and Macro evolution, 4) Sexual reproduction, 5) Abiogenesis, 6) Religion, 7) Intelligent Design, and many more.

It is interesting to read how a scientist attempts to answer the many questions that people have regarding creation and evolution. You have to decide for yourself if the answers he provides make sense and aid you in your own understanding of the many different topics that are covered.

Disclosure

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