
Creation Answers

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Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and has published in various creation publications, such as the Creation Research Society Quarterly, Creation Ex Nihilo, TJ, and Origins (from the Biblical Creation Society, UK).

This newsletter is meant to help people plug into creation resources and get informed about creation and evolution. It is provided free of charge on request. Using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary for viewing the newsletter. There are no restrictions in copying this newsletter or passing it on to others. To request to be placed on the e-mail list, send a request to Wayne at wayne@creationanswers.net.

More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the creationanswers.net web site. You'll also find many other resources. <http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

Greetings and Happy Holidays. I hope you and your family are having a good holiday. I hope you find this issue interesting. The fossil record is a topic I have not addressed in my newsletter before. Be sure to notice the brief report at the end about soft tissue found in a dinosaur bone recently. The web page link at the end is something worth seeing, for the color close up pictures of the dinosaur bone.

In November, I did not do a Creation Study Group meeting since it fell on Thanksgiving weekend when I was traveling in Kansas. November 17th I spoke at the monthly evening meeting of the Greater Houston Creation Association. I had a great time and I was warmly received. I also sold a number of books. I spoke on Jupiter's moon Io. My technical paper on Io is now available for download from my web site, under the Astronomy section.

I would like to invite anyone reading this to let me know what you think of my newsletter. I would welcome suggestions. I would also welcome suggestions and comments regarding the Creation Study Group meetings. If you live in the Dallas metro area, do come to the meeting if you have a chance. See my web site, in the Resources section for details and directions.

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The Fossils - What do they Record?

Fossils are fun to search for and have been collected by amateurs and scientists alike for many years. Fossils are any type of remains of living things that lived in the past. We usually think of bones found in rock. But fossils can also be in the form of molds or casts in rock, where the bone is gone but the shape of it is left intact. A mold is the impression in mud or rock that outlines shape of the original bone or other object. A cast is the reverse, where the bone itself is replaced by some material that is found in the shape of the bone. "Fossil footprints" is a term for a mold that is left from a footprint.

There are also other types of fossils that are not in rock. An example would be amber, in which insects or plants are often encased in what is basically hardened tree resin. Then sometimes there are animals found encased in ice or frozen, in arctic regions. These would also be considered fossils. In rock, usually minerals replace the original organic materials in the bone and flesh and so the fossil is actually rock. There are some unusual cases where fossils include some original material that is "unfossilized," meaning that it has not been chemically replaced by minerals. A recent case of this is discussed briefly later in this issue.

Fossils are a record of life from the past and thus are important for evaluating the evidence for or against evolution. Do fossils record the kind of changes suggested by evolution? According to evolution, simple single-celled organisms evolved into multi-celled organisms (invertebrate), then the invertebrate evolved into fishes (the first vertebrate), then fishes to amphibians, then amphibians to reptiles, then reptiles into mammals. There is a great variety of living things represented in fossils. Many fossils are of marine creatures, especially organisms that live on

the ocean floor. The widespread abundance of these type of fossils on the continents is a valid argument for the world-wide Flood described in Genesis. Fossils of large land animals, such as dinosaurs or large mammals, are relatively rare.

However there are certain places where there are what has become known as "fossil graveyards." In some fossil graveyards, there are many many of the same organism, buried together in great numbers. In other fossil graveyards, a variety of different types of organisms are all buried together. Creationist Henry Morris, in his famous book, *The Genesis Flood*, describes several dramatic sites where many different types of insects, plants, and mammals, from different types of climates, are all buried together. One notable example is the Cumberland Bone Cave, in Maryland. Another well known example is the Baltic Amber Deposits, in Northern Russia. I could also mention other sites in the United States, such as the Flourissant Deposits west of Colorado Springs, which I have visited. There are others such as the Morrison Formation in western Colorado, famous for its dinosaur fossils, the Gobi Desert deposits in China, and lignite coal deposits in Geiseltal, Germany. All these suggest catastrophic geological processes on a large scale.

Quick burial is essential for fossils to form. Another important ingredient is when various minerals are dissolved in water that comes in contact with the buried organisms. It is well known that fossilization does not require long periods of time, it merely requires the proper chemical conditions. Something like the global Flood of Genesis would undoubtedly create conditions ideal for the formation of fossils all over the world.

Gaps in the Fossil Record

Creationists have long said that there are gaps in the fossil record. This is to mean that there is a lack of known fossils showing a series of changes like evolution would

require in living things. A hypothesized living thing that was an intermediate form between other organisms is often called a transitional form. There have been a number of evolutionary scientists over the years who have acknowledged the problem of the gaps in the fossil record that creationists have written about. They will say that the evidence from paleontology does not show the biological changes evolution proposes. However, most evolutionary scientists just believe that creationists have misrepresented the evidence in various ways. There have been a long list of cases put forward where a certain fossil was found and evolutionists argued that it was a transitional form of some kind. Creationists have pointed out various problems with interpreting these cases as transitional forms. A well known example is Archeopteryx. Archeopteryx was long claimed to be a transitional form that was an ancestor to modern birds. It was thought to be a transitional form between reptiles and birds because it had teeth and claws on its wings. But creationists have pointed out that there are a few birds today with similar characteristics, such as the Hoatzin; and there are now known fossil birds that would be older than Archeopteryx. So, how could Archeopteryx be an ancestor of modern birds?

I think one of the reasons there is an intractable disagreement between creationists and evolutionists about transitional forms is that they have different definitions of the term. What would make something a transitional form? I would say there are three types of criteria that might make something a valid example of an evolutionary transitional form. First, it would have to be found in the proper geological layer to put it at the right time in the evolutionary time line. The technical term for this is stratigraphic intermediate. Secondly, it would have to be of a form in its body characteristics (its anatomy) that would make it somehow in-between other major types of creatures. Note that minor changes

do not count here. For example, it is not an evidence for an evolutionary transition to show that the shape of the teeth changed or the shape of a birds beak changed. These are relatively minor changes and these levels of changes do not require new biological information in the DNA. These type of changes are possible without mutations being involved. An organism fitting this criteria would be called a morphological intermediate.

Evolutionists often treat fossils such that if it is *either* a stratigraphic intermediate *or* a morphological intermediate then that is sufficient to call it a transitional form. However, in my experience, creationists generally have another criteria though they sometimes don't make it explicit. Not only would the organism have to be in the right geological strata and of the right kind of unusual anatomy, you would have to be able to show that it was less than fully functional. It had some significant disadvantage or some characteristic that did not work for what it needed. Thus, it was weeded out by natural selection because it was not well adapted to its environment. This last criteria rules out many of the proposed transitional forms put forward by evolutionists. Evolutionists believe in transitional forms because they have a much less stringent definition than creationists do.

There have been a few rare cases where evolutionists try to address this third criteria but in my experience, their ideas do not stand up to much scrutiny. It is the other two criteria that evolutionists focus more of their attention on it seems to me. A creationist would often say that an organism would have to meet all three criteria to be a transitional form. At least, this would be my view. The various cases put forward to be transitions by evolutionists do not meet all these criteria. In fact, in a number of cases, they were not even real organisms at all! There are many examples where the fossil evidence has been misinterpreted or the fossils were not processed or documented properly. In my December 2001 issue of

Creation Answers, I discuss one case where there is little evidence the proposed transitional form called *Ambulocetus* ever existed. That issue of this newsletter can be downloaded from creationanswers.net. *Ambulocetus* is a proposed transitional form between land mammals and whales. Often there is way too much that is claimed based on too little evidence.

The fossil evidence shows that living things appear in the fossil record abruptly and fully functional. Abrupt appearance means that in relation to the old age evolutionary time scale, as we look up through the rocks from older to younger, we come across a given type of fossil all at once and it remains the same in younger strata, unless it goes extinct. We do not see a long sequence of organisms that are transitions from one form to another. In fact, many basic types of living things appear all at one particular level in the rock record, known as the Cambrian! This is known as the Cambrian explosion, believed to be about 545 million years ago. It is considered to be somehow an evidence of rapid evolutionary development of many new forms in a "short" time of millions of years. The fossil record also ends for many species and it ends abruptly as well. But the mystery is why there are not transitional forms preceding the many types of fossils of the Cambrian explosion. The Cambrian "explosion" was not a rapid development of new life forms, it was the rapid burial of many life forms, probably early in Noah's Flood.

Fully functional means the organism has anatomical characteristics that are well adapted and effective for the lifestyle or habitat of that organism. They are not half-functioning body parts that do not work well. I would mention the duck billed platypus for example. Some have tried to argue the platypus is a transitional form. But this argument does not work. The platypus does have a unique combination of characteristics. It has something similar to a snake's fang on its hind feet, it suckles it's

young like a mammal, yet it lays eggs like a reptile. It also has a very advanced sonar system and the ability to detect extremely small electrical currents. So it is well adapted to finding small prey under water, though it breathes air and lays eggs on land. If it is a transitional form, what is it transitioning from and to? You cannot argue that it's sonar is somehow inferior or not effective or that it has problems with its reproduction or something. The platypus does just fine. It is just a unique creature designed by God. It is an example of what is sometimes called a Mosaic, not a transitional form.

I could very easily fill a years worth of newsletters just with quotes of evolutionary scientists pointing out what I have said in this article about the fossil record (no transitions, abrupt appearance). The evidence from the fossil record supports Biblical creation because the Bible describes living things reproducing "according to their kind." From the Bible, living things are what they are from the start, allowing for minor adaptations to the environment. They do not evolve into something really different. The Noahic Flood explains how so many species could go extinct either directly due to the Flood or due to its aftermath in the years following the Flood.

There is more than one view of how evolution took place. Dr. Stephen J. Gould of Harvard argued for the view that evolutionary changes happened quickly so that they were not recorded in fossils. This view is known as Punctuated Equilibrium. This view, which is a response to the fossil evidence, is very hard to reconcile with what is known from genetics and molecular biology about how organisms change. Gould was quoted many times by creationists. Other evolutionists quoted by creationists include Dr. David Raup, Curator of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Even if creationists are all wrong about the fossils and evolution, the statements made by these leading evolutionists should make people seriously question evolutionary theory. My favorite evolutionary paleontologist to quote

is Dr. Colin Patterson, Senior Paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History in London. There is now a famous letter Dr. Patterson sent to creationist Luther Sunderland in 1979. This letter has been quoted in a number of publications and books. This was published first I believe in Sunderland's book, *Darwin's Enigma* in 1984. I am quoting part of it below. You can also find this in the September 1988 issue of *Moody Monthly*. Sunderland had apparently asked Patterson to list some transitional forms; the following was his response.

"I fully agree with your comments on the lack of direct illustration of evolutionary transitions in my book. If I knew of any, fossil or living, I would certainly have included them. . . . Yet Gould and the American Museum people are hard to contradict when they say there are no transitional fossils. As a paleontologist myself, I am much occupied with the philosophical problems of identifying ancestral forms in the fossil record. You say I should at least 'show a photo of the fossil from which each type of organism was derived.' I will lay it on the line--there is not one such fossil for which one could make a watertight argument."

Creationist Duane Gish, who wrote some well known books about the fossil record, made another good point about transitional forms. There are two particularly large gaps where as far as I know, no one has ever even proposed an actual fossil being a transition within these two super-gaps. The first super-gap is between single-celled organisms and complex multi-celled invertebrates. There are vast differences between these types of organisms but no transitional forms have even been proposed! There are reports of fossilized bacteria and algae in very ancient rock and then there are fossils of organisms like

sponges, jellyfish, snails, and trilobites in the Cambrian. There is nothing in between.

The second super-gap is between the invertebrates (like the jellyfish and others mentioned) and the first fish (vertebrate). No actual fossil has ever been proposed to be in this gap, to my knowledge. Some invertebrates live in hard shells and some do not, but they do not have a skeleton. It is a profound change for organisms like this to become creatures with a backbone and skeleton. All body systems would have to change. There is also nothing in this gap.

The lack of transitional forms has always been a problem for evolution and it always will be. The many proposed transitional forms put forward by evolutionists in my opinion are just examples of bad science. I say this after years of reading various creation publications and spending time in libraries looking up papers on these issues. Unfortunately some of these examples of bad science are still in textbooks. Evolutionists will often try to justify their view saying that it is rare for fossils to form and so you can't expect transitional forms to be easy to find. But this is not valid for this reason. The longer it takes for an evolutionary transition to occur, the more time there is for all the transitional forms to live and die and be preserved as fossils. But, if the evolutionary change takes place too fast, it is simply impossible due to what we know about genetics. Today it seems to me that evolutionists do not mention fossils as much as they used to. Many seem to think the evidence for evolution comes more from biology.

But if life evolved through a series of stages there ought to be fossils showing that it really happened. These transitional stages would be more abundant than all the species we know of now. Instead we find separate types of living things that do not change into other types over time. Paleontology has given us many interesting and important insights into Earth's past. But it does not show that evolution happened. The fossil record fits a creation view much better than

evolution. So, what do the fossils record? They record the creation of separate types and a global judgment that has caused many types to go extinct.

The Federal Court Decision for Dover, Pennsylvania School District

Recently (Dec. 20, 2005) a long legal battle apparently ended over a policy adopted by a local School Board in Dover, Pennsylvania. The Dover Area School Board (a rural area South of Harrisburg) had adopted a policy saying that as of January 2005 teachers would be required to read a statement in ninth grade biology class at Dover High School. The statement, which is four short paragraphs, includes that evolution is a theory and not a fact. It says there are gaps in the theory of evolution "for which there is no evidence." It also mentions Intelligent Design as an explanation for the origin of life that differs from Darwin's view. It tells students that the book "Of Pandas and People" is available for students who would be interested in Intelligent Design.

After the School Board adopted this policy (in October 2004), the policy was challenged on the basis that it was unconstitutional, being a violation of the establishment clause in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Apparently it was a group of parents in the School District that challenged the policy. However, the legal team against the School District (the Plaintiffs) is from the ACLU and the Americans United for Separation of Church and State. This case is interesting in that you have a local School District issue that was tried in a Federal District court. The case was widely publicized. The School Board was wanting students to be aware of Intelligent Design as an alternative to evolution. I think the Dover School Board is to be commended. However, the Judge ruled against the School District. The Judge said that the Board had religious motives

and that Intelligent Design was not science because it allowed for a supernatural cause. This decision is not likely to be challenged in a higher court because eight members of the Dover School Board were voted out of office in November.

I am saddened by this result but not surprised. It shows how strongly the idea of evolution has a grip on peoples thinking. Even a modest statement can not be read in a public school science classroom, according to this ruling. It was ruled unconstitutional for ninth grade students to be told about the availability of the book, *Of Pandas and People*, though that book does not deal with religious concepts. In this and other cases, freedom of speech and religious expression suffers in favor of a view of the First Amendment that was not the original intent of the writers of the Constitution at all. It is an issue parents are right to be concerned about. Parents have to take steps themselves to make their children aware that evolution is not the only way to understand origins.

Dinosaur Soft Tissue - Creation Implications

Earlier this year (2005) a professor at Montana State University found soft tissue in a leg bone of a *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. This T-Rex bone was not entirely fossilized. Scientists applied chemicals to remove the mineral content. This would normally leave nothing left, for a dinosaur fossil. But, in this case there was flexible connective tissue, branching blood vessels, and cells that may be red blood cells. Some of the structures were still transparent and elastic! The scientist said it was like a slice of modern bone. The latest issue of the journal *TJ*, from *Answers in Genesis*, (Vol.19, No.3, 2005) contains a detailed paper about this find from creationists Carl Wieland and David Menton. This was surprising to evolutionists. How could such materials survive for over 65 million years? For more, see this page:

http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2005/0325Dino_tissue.asp