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## THE MYTH OF THE PEPPERED MOTHS

Most schoolbooks have a story that is supposed to show evolution in action. To make it more interesting, we wrote it like this:

Once upon a time in jolly ol' England there lived the famous peppered moth.

Some of these moths were white with black spots (*Biston Betularia Typica*) and some were black with white spots (*Biston Betularia Carbonaria*). Alas, the peppered moths had an enemy. Because of their delicious taste, birds eagerly sought after the moths!



However, the rocks and trees of the kingdom were covered with a light colored, scaly plant called lichen. Because the white moths were about the same color as the lichen, they were well hidden when they landed on the trees.

Because of this, the black moths had a big problem. They weren't well hidden and could easily be seen! Alas, the black peppers became easy pickings for the birds until only a few could be found.

That's the way it was for a long, long time. Then, the people of England began to build factories that burned coal in their furnaces. These furnaces belched out smoke that blackened the skies. It fell to the earth covering everything. In time, most of the lichen was killed.

Now the white moths could be seen on the trees more easily. The birds began to gobble them up! The black moths could only laugh, because now they were hidden on the dark soot-covered trees.



So, throughout the kingdom, more and more black moths and less and less white moths could be found.

After a long time, the people of

England became tired of the dirty, black soot on everything and changed their factories so they wouldn't pollute the air. As the skies began to clear, the light-colored lichen grew back.

Can you guess what also happened? That's right. White moths were able to hide on the trees and, once again, there were more white peppered moths than black ones. . .

Many textbooks go on to say that this story is a good example of evolution. The moths that were best suited to the changes in their environment produced more offspring than other moths. In time, these traits might become

distinct enough that the moths could be considered their own special variety. Many scientists believe that if these little changes were allowed to continue over long periods of time, they would result in big changes. Some animals could even change, or evolve, into other animals – like bears to whales, for example.

However, think about this: At the beginning of the story we had white and black peppered moths. Although the numbers of white moths and black moths had shifted back and forth, we still ended up with white and black peppered moths. White moths did not change into black moths and black moths did not change into white moths.

Changes in the environment were simply emphasizing traits in the moths that were already there. Nothing new was created! Moths are still moths! By the way, the story never tells how moths got there in the first place. So, can peppered moths be "proof" of evolution? No, don't be fooled!

### THINGS THE TEXTBOOKS DON'T TELL YOU

- Peppered moths fly only *at night*. Nobody knows where they hide during the day.
- Textbook pictures supporting this theory were taken of *dead moths glued to a tree!*
- In 25 years of experiments, only 2 peppered moths have been seen *on* a tree trunk!
- In an unpolluted forest, scientists trapped *four times as many dark moths as light ones* — the opposite of what would be expected.

Source: Creation Ex Nihilo, Vol.21,  
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