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THE PALOLO WORM

On exactly the same two days in the autumn of each year, an amazing thing takes place around the Samoan and Fijian Islands of the South Pacific Ocean. At dawn of the first day, the water quickly turns into a mass of billions of worms that look like green, wriggling strings of spaghetti.

People excitedly scoop, net, and ladle the worms into buckets, to be eaten on the spot or later at a community worm fry. Shortly after the worms first appear, they are gone. However, the people have not actually caught the worm; but have caught the hind end (*epitoke*) of the **palolo worm**.

The 12 to 18 inch palolo worm makes its home inside the crevices of rocks and coral reefs in the ocean waters. With their large jaws and teeth, they dig deep, hollow tubes into the coral. With their heads buried in the dark burrow, they quietly catch passing food with their "tails."

When the palolo worms become adults, they don't go looking for a mate. Instead, they stay home and send their hind parts out to do the job!

The body of the palolo worm is separated into segments (parts) and each part holds a set of organs needed for life. As the breeding season nears, the epitoke of each worm – about three times as long as the front part, makes an amazing

change. The organs begin to waste away except those

needed for making babies. The epitoke of the female becomes filled with tiny eggs and turns a brightly colored blue-green. The male's epitoke turns reddish-brown and fills with sperm. Both look like puffed-up sacks.

The epitoke continues to change until each of its segments grows a single, tiny eyespot that can sense light. Together, these spots form a row of light-sensitive "eyes" along one side of the epitoke. This helps them know which way is up.

Exactly 7 days after the October/November full moon, the high tides are lower and low tides are higher than usual (neap tides). Just before dawn, the palolo worms back part way out of their deep tunnels and their epitokes break off! These broken-off hind sections then wriggle and spiral to the surface. By dawn, billions of squirming, twisting epitokes come together, covering the ocean's surface. The epitokes float for up to an hour and, when the sun rises, they burst open like an explosion, spilling a milky mass of eggs and sperm into the sea. The empty, shrunken bodies of the epitokes then sink to die on the seabed.

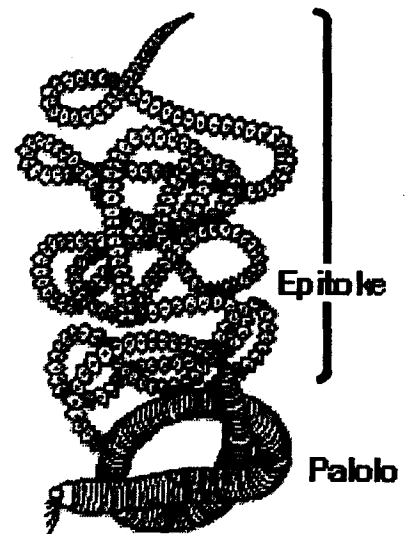
The eggs and sperm come together to make fertilized eggs. These eggs hatch into babies (larvae) that drift in the open water for three days. After that, they sink to the bottom and dig burrows for themselves in the coral reef next to the adults. Meanwhile, the front ends of the adult palolo worms continue on with life and grow new hind parts for the next year!

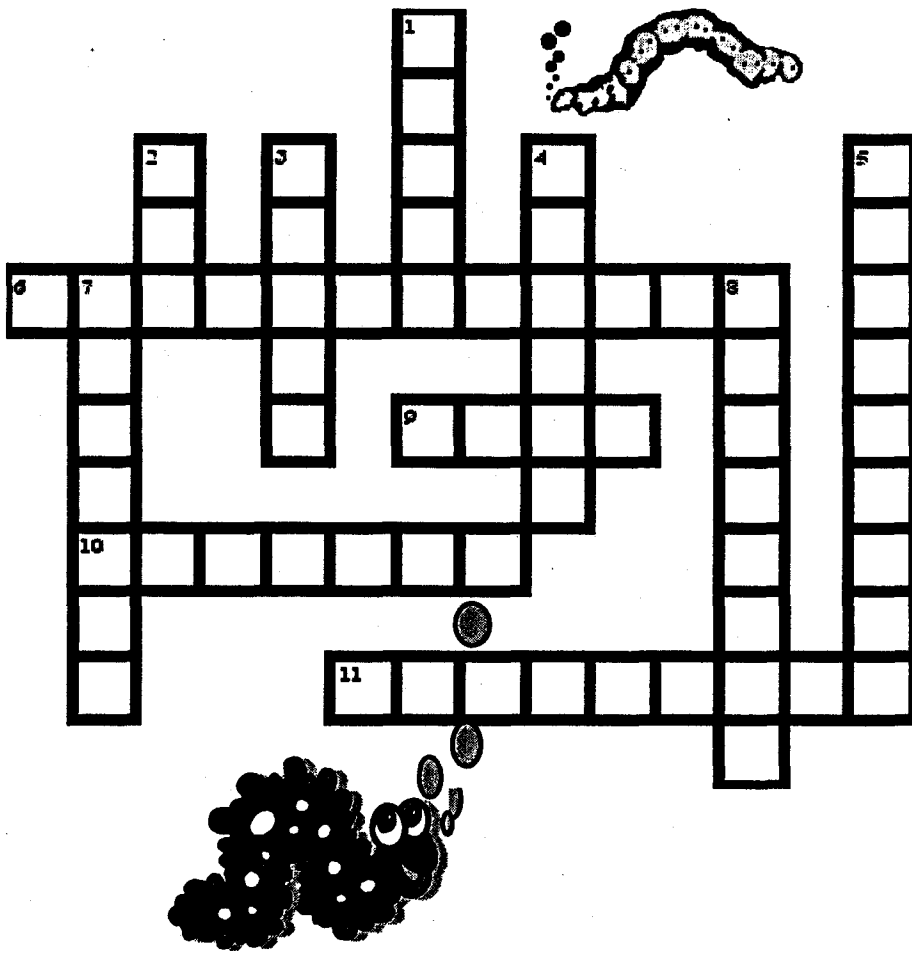
How do the palolo worms know how and when to do all this? After all, they live by themselves with their heads buried in a dark hole, so they can't see whether it is night or day. They don't seem to feel the tide either. Furthermore, the full moon in October comes ten to eleven days earlier each year, so the worms can't just count 365 days to know the right time to release their epitokes. They don't seem to watch the moon because they mate whether the sky is clear or completely covered by clouds. They don't seem to talk to each other, for worms are releasing their hind parts 600 miles away at the exact same time! We just don't know how they do this. Yet, year after year, the palolo worms never miss the date by even one day!

The timing of the palolo worm is so exact that it could never have come about by the chance and accident of evolution. It is clear that the palolo worm was created by design. Only an intelligent Creator could make such an amazing worm!

**"God that hath made the world,
 and all things therein..."**

Acts 17:24 a





Solve the crossword puzzle using words that can be found in **THE PALOLO WORM** on the front page.

ACROSS

- 6 Color of male palolo worm
- 9 A type of tide
- 10 The 10th month of the year
- 11 Color of female palolo worm

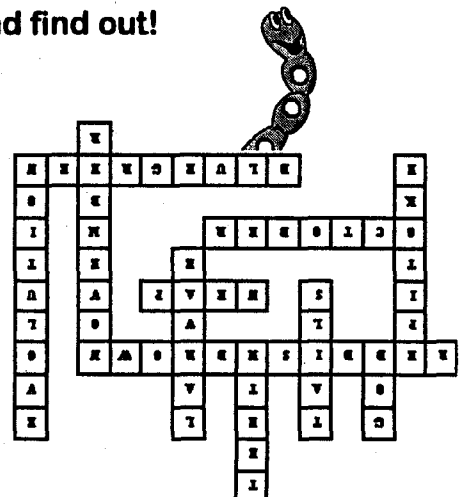
DOWN

- 1 The palolo worm uses these along with his jaws to dig a hole in the coral
- 2 Who made the palolo worm by intelligent design?
- 3 The palolo worms use these to catch food
- 4 Baby palolo worms
- 5 Something that could NEVER make a palolo worm by chance and accident
- 7 The hind end or back part of a palolo worm
- 8 The 11th month of the year

CHOCOLATE	FOR	WASHINGTON	MARY	BY
HIM	UTAH	COW	FOOTBALL	WERE
SUSAN	ALL	VOLLEYBALL	THINGS	VANILLA
OHIO	CREATED	THAT	CHICKEN	ARE
IN	TEXAS	SARAH	HEAVEN	SHEEP
AND	THAT	STRAWBERRY	GYMNASTICS	ARE
HORSE	JILL	IN	EARTH	SOCCER
SHERBERT	COLOSSIANS	GOAT	FLORIDA	I:
BASEBALL	ROCKY ROAD	16 a	COLORADO	BETH

1. Cross out all girls' names
2. Cross out all farm animals
3. Cross out all ice cream flavors
4. Cross out all states
5. Cross out all sports

Where did everything come from? Follow the instructions to the left and find out!



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