



Think & Believe

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Spotted Owls and Sacred Cows

(by Dave and Mary Jo Nutting)

Spotted owls have become the butt of many jokes, much derision, and sometimes outright hatred by conservative commentators, unemployed lumberjacks, and struggling timber-town businessmen. The raging controversy isn't the owls fault, though. They are just high-profile pawns in a very heated war of worldviews.

Whether the owls are even "endangered" is a matter of debate. The "data" varies depending on the viewpoint of the researcher. The real issue, though, is much deeper -- it's a question of values and of man's opinion versus God's Word. Are owls just as "valuable" as people? Is human life fundamentally different from other life? When there are apparent conflicts of interest between people and creatures, who wins? The answers depend upon one's worldview.

According to evolution, people are fundamentally no different from animals -- their existence and dominance today are just the result of lucky accidents. According to traditional Darwinism, the "fittest survive." Thus, as the dominant species, people are free to do as they please until some stronger species evolves and humans are eliminated in the ongoing "struggle for survival." Modern man has often acted upon this philosophy, devastating the environment and other living creatures in his greed for power and "things".

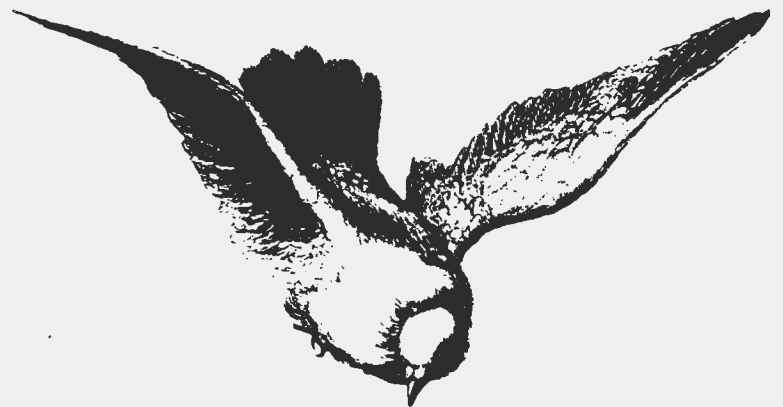
Lately, though, an ancient evolutionary twist which emphasizes the inter-relatedness of life is gaining wide support. In this view, the animals are our "brothers" or "sisters," the earth itself is a living entity (Gaia or "Mother Earth"), and all life has equal "value." Thus, rats have just as much right to live as people, cows eat while children starve, whales are saved while babies die, and spotted owls are protected at all costs.

The Bible, however, teaches that man was created in the image of God and given the responsibility of

being caretaker of God's world. This was a pleasant and easy task before sin and death entered the world, but now it involves hard work and often difficult decisions. God certainly cares for all His creatures, but they are fundamentally different from mankind, made in the image of God. We are His special creatures, the crown of creation, so valuable to Him that He sent His Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.

God expects us to be wise stewards of His earth, but not to worship it. We are to honor and give thanks to Him --- to **worship the Creator, not the creature.** This earth will surely be replaced by a "new heavens and new earth," but until then we are to obey God, to value people as He does, to share the Gospel, and to exercise wise dominion over the earth. In order to do this job well, we need quality research, free from the influence of pagan philosophies, economic greed or political power. As in all areas of life, we need to know the truth of God's Word and live it consistently.

(Relevant verses to read: Gen. 1:26-29; Gen. 2:15; Gen. 3:17-19; Gen. 9:3; Ps. 8:3-8; Matt. 6:26; Matt. 10:31; Matt. 12:12)



Feathers From Scales? Ha!
(See Spotlight on Science)

NOTES & QUOTES

■ In his book, **Evolution: A Theory in Crisis**, Dr. Michael Denton discusses at length the problem of "bridging the gaps" between one type of animal and its supposed evolutionary ancestor. He says:

□ Any change ... which on the surface may at first appear quite trivial, on closer examination would inevitably necessitate extensive reorganization of the entire anatomy and physiology of the organism. ... even the most tentative schemes outlining a sequence of events are seldom convincing. (p. 202)

■ Denton devotes a long section to the problems of bird evolution. He presents the two main theories, quoting John Ostrom, an "expert in this field:"

□ Previous speculations on this question have produced two quite different scenarios. Stated very simply these are that birds began to fly "from the trees down" – or "from the ground up." The first is the widely favored and very logical "arboreal theory," ... The second is the often ridiculed and seemingly less probable "cursorial theory," ... (p. 204)

■ Denton then quotes Gerhard Heilmann's classic book, **The Origin of Birds**, to describe the "trees down" explanation:

□ From being a terrestrial runner the animal now turns arboreal climber, leaping further and further from branch to branch, from tree to tree and from the trees to the ground. Meanwhile the first toe changes to a hind toe so adapted as to grasp the branches. As the hind limbs while running on the ground have abandoned the reptilian position, are kept closer to the body when leaping takes place, the pressure of the air acting like a stimulus, produces, chiefly on the forelimbs and the tail, a parachutal plane consisting of longish scales developing along the posterior edge of the forearms and the side edges of a flattened tail.

By the friction of the air, the outer edges of the scales become frayed, the fraying gradually changing into still longer horny processes, which in course of time become more and more featherlike, until the perfect feather is produced. From wings, tails and flanks, the feathering spreads to the whole body. The lengthening of the penultimate phalanges of the fingers is attained by using the claws for climbing, and this elongation has been very propitious to the subsequent development of the wing. (Heilmann, in Denton, p. 204)

■ So feathers are just frayed scales? (See **Spotlight on Science** for the marvelous design features of feathers.) Though it sounds fantastic, this basic scenario with certain modifications is still widely held and taught to school children today, but there is no evidence. It's just a story! The "ground up" theory sounds just as fantastic:

□ Perhaps *Archeopteryx* [supposedly a "transitional

form" or "primitive bird"] used its wings to flush out and capture insects as it ran along. Occasional flapping of these proto-wings would have allowed *Archeopteryx* to leap and capture escaping prey; sustained flapping might eventually have given rise to sustained flight. (Roger Lewin, **Thread of Life**, p. 180, in reference to Ostrom's cursorial view.)

■ Concerning this theory and the problems of flight in general, Michael Denton sees many difficulties:

□ Although plausible to some degree, like other models it raises a number of problems. An obvious difficulty is that no known animal regularly catches insects by leaping after them in the way envisaged in this model. ... Only the most skilled flyers, the bats and a few species of bird are able to capture insects in the air. (p. 207)

□ The cursorial theory of bird flight origins has received virtually no acceptance, apparently for several good reasons ... including the seemingly impossible "bootstrap" effort required for the animal to lift itself by ... flapping proto-wings. (Ostrom, in Denton, p. 206)

□ It is significant ... that every single flying bird, from *Archeopteryx* on has possessed a highly developed aerofoil consisting of a complex arrangement of fully developed flight feathers. (Denton, p. 208)

□ Would a primitive wing, ... allowing only very restricted movement through the air be of such a selective advantage that an organism would sacrifice its forelimbs in its favour? (p. 215)

□ In addition to the feather and the avian lung there are many other unique features in the biology of the birds ... which similarly defy plausible explanation in gradualistic terms. Altogether it adds up to an enormous conceptual difficulty in envisaging how a reptile could have been gradually converted into a bird. (Denton, p. 213)

■ Is this why so many evolutionists are jumping on Gould's "Punctuated Equilibrium" theory? Gould says it *didn't* happen gradually, but that massive changes took place in a relatively *short* period of time. We believe Gould's model simply compounds the problem. It seems to take a lot more faith to believe any of these stories than to believe the Bible when it says: "And God created ... every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good." (Genesis 1:21)

■ Dr. Denton is a medical doctor /molecular biologist. He was not a creationist when he wrote this book, although he sounds like one. With his knowledge of all the problems with evolution you might wonder why not? Remember, this is not merely a scientific issue – it is a spiritual one. For more detailed material on birds and the plight of their flight, as well as superb material on most areas of assumed evolution, order Denton's book, **Evolution: a Theory in Crisis**. (\$21.95 includes postage.)

SPOTLIGHT ON SCIENCE

Feathers From Scales??

A Gary Larson cartoon depicts a meeting of several dinosaurs discussing their ultimate fate -- extinction. The caption says: "Wings, feathers, nests? A crazy idea, but it just might work!" It certainly does sound like a crazy idea, but several science centers we visited lately have actually made the statement that dinosaurs are still with us -- they "merely" evolved into birds. So, somehow, legs must have developed into wings and scales into feathers. Let's take a close look at what some call the "easy step" in the supposed process -- scales evolving into feathers.

According to one theory of the evolution of birds, a reptile scale became more and more adapted for flight by becoming elongated and fraying out. The frayed scale then developed into an amazingly strong but flexible feather with an intricate system of veins, hooks, and barbules. The hooks and barbules began to work together to produce a highly sophisticated zipper which birds can't do without.

Is there any evidence that feathers are just frayed scales? No! There isn't even a hint of anything in the fossil record or in the living world which would suggest such a thing. Both scales and feathers have been found in the fossil record, but every time they are 100% scale or 100% feather with absolutely nothing to show one thing changing into another. Yes, scales and the intricate parts of the feather are made of the same material, keratin, but does that mean one evolved from another? No, in fact fingernails are also made of the same material, but no one would venture to say that fingernails evolved into feathers.

Actually, feathers are much closer in development and structure to hair than to scales. Dr. David Menton, a professor of anatomy, lists 18 similarities to hair. So why don't evolutionists suggest that feathers evolved from hair instead? It's because the theory of evolution needs to have scales turning into feathers. Evolutionists **believe** birds came from reptiles, not mammals, and reptiles have scales, not hair. Besides, according to evolution, mammals were barely making their appearance when the first birds were supposedly already fully developed.

So there you have it. According to evolutionary "theory," birds evolved from reptiles; therefore, feathers have to arise from scales. Consequently, despite the evidence, this becomes the "fact" and appears as such in textbooks and sciences centers around the country -- and **you are expected to buy it!** Do you understand? Sadly, it's not always the evidence that dictates what scientists call "facts" -- all too often they are determined by someone's preconceived ideas or bias.

Birds' Breathtaking System

In a previous issue of **Think & Believe** (Vol.2, No.5), we discussed the unique features relating to flight in birds, including positioning and control of feathers, size and structure of bones, and efficiency of the circulatory and digestive systems. In this issue we consider the amazing respiratory system, which, according to Dr. Michael Denton "seem[s] to defy plausible evolutionary explanations." (**Evolution: A Theory in Crisis**, p. 210)

Most vertebrates draw air into their lungs through a series of branching tubes which finally terminate in tiny air sacs. The air must enter and exit through the same tubes, leaving a certain amount of residual ("dead") air in the lungs.

Birds have a totally different system, though. Special air sacs extend from the lungs into all major parts of the bird's body. They do not function directly in gaseous exchange, but serve as "bellows" to maintain a constant flow through tiny air tubes where the exchange actually takes place. These tiny air tubes branch profusely, permeating the lungs, and then join together again. Special valves in the tubes ensure that air flows in only one direction through the lungs, providing the continual supply of fresh air needed for flight.

This is a very amazing system, which poses a serious challenge to evolution. According to Denton:

No lung in any other vertebrate species is known which in any way approaches the avian [bird] system. Moreover it is identical in all essential details in birds as diverse as humming birds, ostriches and hawks.

Just how such an utterly different respiratory system could have evolved gradually from the standard vertebrate design is fantastically difficult to envisage, especially bearing in mind that the maintenance of respiratory function is absolutely vital to the life of an organism to the extent that the slightest malfunction leads to death within minutes. Just as the feather cannot function as an organ of flight until the hooks and barbules are coadapted to fit together perfectly, so the avian lung cannot function as an organ of respiration until the parabronchial system which permeates it and the air sac system which guarantees the parabronchi their air supply are both highly developed and able to function together in a perfectly integrated manner.

... The suspicion inevitably arises that perhaps no functional intermediate exists between the dead-end and continuous through-put types of lung. (**Evolution: A Theory in Crisis**, pp. 211,212)

Suspicion indeed! This fantastically complex system defies evolutionary explanations and proclaims the wisdom and power of the **ALMIGHTY CREATOR GOD!**

EVENTS

(Call local contact for time and place.)

- Mar 24-Apr 2: ICR Grand Canyon Adventure**
Contact ICR, 619-448-0900.
- Ap 3-8: Winter Park, CO:** Snow Mtn Creation/Ski Adventure
Contact us, 303-245-5906.
- Ap 5-6: Estes Park, CO:** Nat. Homeschool BB Tourn
Contact FEAST 210-692-7214. (Tourn. Ap. 2-8)
- Ap 17-18: Estes Park, CO:** Details in Progress
Contact us, 303-245-5906.
- Ap 18-30: Wyoming Trip** (Details in progress)
Contact Marilyn Johnson, 242-3859.
- May: Nuttings speak in Mongolia!**
- Jun 5-9: Loma, CO:** Loma Community Church VBS
Contact Fred Boltmer 303-858-7171.
- Jun 15-17: Denver, CO:** CHEC Homeschool Conference
Contact 303-388-1888.
- June 19-23: Kremmling, CO:** Kremmling Comm Chur VBS
Contact Tom Johnson, 303-724-9696.
- June 26-30: Kremmling, CO:** Mount Elam Bible Camp
Contact Tom Johnson, 303-724-9696.
- July 3-7: Collbran, CO:** Twin Peaks Science Adventure
Contact us, 303-245-5906.
- July 17-21: Paonia, CO:** VBS
Contact Penny Sutton, 303-527-3527.
- July 26-29: Roggen, CO:** Homestead Bible Camp
Contact Robert Korhuis 303-732-4501.
- Aug 13-18: Lake City, CO:** Redcloud Mountain Adventure
Contact us, 303-245-5906.
- Aug 20-25: Lake City, CO:** Redcloud Mountain Adventure
Contact us, 303-245-5906.
- Sept 1-4: Bailey, CO:** Id-Ra-Ha-Je Creation Family Camp
Contact Rod Adams, 303-674-8442.

Please keep this schedule and pray for us!

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Alpha Omega Institute
P. O. Box 4343
Grand Junction, CO 81502
(303) 245-5906

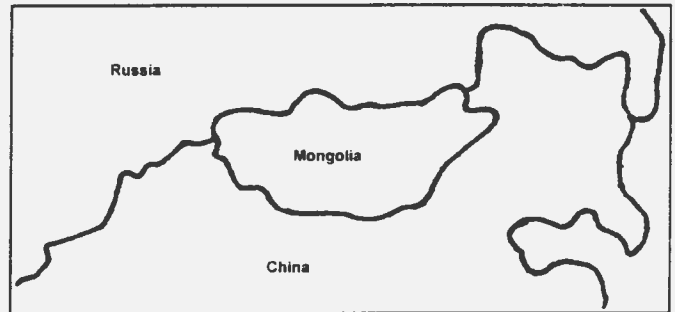
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MONGOLIA?

Grab your map and check it out! It's tucked right in between Siberia and China, and it's where the Nuttings have been invited to speak for the full month of May. Mongolia has a colorful history which includes Genghis Khan and Marco Polo, but for the past 70 years it's been locked in the chains of communism with its atheistic, evolutionary worldview. Now at last the doors are open and many Mongols are seeking the truth. Since the creation message is foundational to all other Christian doctrines, it is a key to understanding the rest of Scripture and building a consistently Christian worldview. The Nuttings' itinerary includes churches, Bible schools, secular schools and universities, both in the capital city and in outlying areas. Please pray for this trip! It's a wonderful opportunity to share the truth of Scripture in a spiritually needy land. (Donations to help go through this open door would be greatly appreciated.)



CREATION CAMPS!

Fun and Educational! Don't miss 'em!

Twin Peaks Family Science Adventure:
Collbran, CO: July 2-7, 1995

Redcloud Family Mountain Adventures:
Lake City, CO: Aug. 13-18 or 20-25, 1995

Id-Ra-Ha-Je Creation Family Camp:
Bailey, CO: Labor Day Week-end, Sept. 1-4, 1995

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