



EVIDENCE FROM BIOLOGY

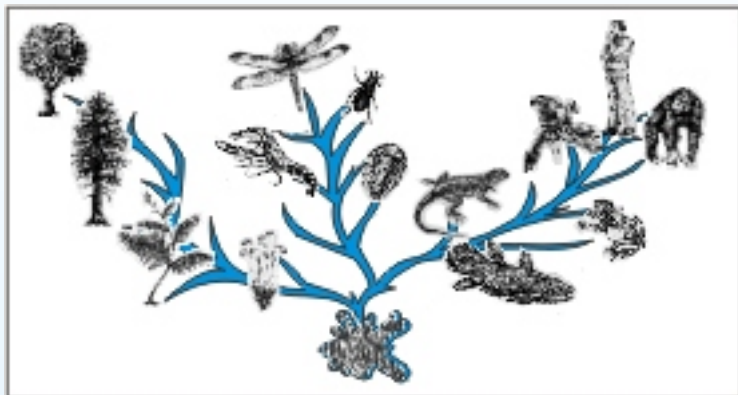


Number 1 in the Evidence series, from Creation Research

**Do animals adapt and evolve?
Does natural selection produce evolution?**

**Do mutations improve living things?
Do embryos show evolutionary stages?**

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WHAT IS EVOLUTION?

Evolution is the theory that claims living organisms have changed through time from ancestral single cells into many different life forms in the world today, including human beings. It has occurred by a process of mutations that generated new genetic information acted on by natural selection, which enabled organisms to become better adapted to their environment and resulted in new species. Evolutionary processes would produce changes in the frequency of genes within a population as it responds to changes in the environment, as less fit creatures are eliminated and older species become extinct.

DO ANIMALS ADAPT AND EVOLVE?

The classic example of adaptation is the variation between finches on the different rocky volcanic islands of the Galapagos group, which lie across the equator about 1000 km (600 miles) west of South America. These birds are commonly known as Darwin's finches and differ from each other in beak length, diet, colour, size and habits among other things. The birds have been used as prime evidence that new species can evolve. This was based on Darwin's suggestion that finch ancestors from South America somehow arrived on the islands where, due to differing pressures, e.g. sexual and environmental, they have produced the many species known today. The variations seen in the finches are regarded as adaptations which fit them for survival, and have been used to classify them into as many as 13 (14?) different species.^{1,2}

What is Adaptation?

Most people are familiar with changes that occur in the body with sports training. You will develop larger muscles as you train hard at some physical activity. When athletes train at high altitude, the body adapts to the lower air pressure by producing more red blood cells. This type of adaptation is an inherent ability to adjust to changes in the environment.

Can adaptation change body structure?

Animals can inherently adapt to changes in their environment in the same way, especially if environmental stimulus starts early in life. If rats find a new edible seed larger and harder than what they already eat they will make the effort to eat it. Young rats whose teeth and jaws are still growing will grow larger teeth and jaws than their parents if brought up on this new diet. Eating larger tougher seeds stimulates growth of teeth, muscles and jaws. On the other hand, if the chewing muscles of developing rats do not work, the jawbones are not stimulated by muscle action and will not grow.³ **No mutation or evolution is involved.** It is another example of the potential built into living creatures which enables them to cope with change in the environment without needing to evolve new genetic information.

Finch Adaptation

If a living population is studied through several generations, it can be demonstrated that their genes are activated by environmental changes. For example: In 1967 finches were introduced to Southeast Island, about 160 km (100 miles) southeast of Midway Island in the Pacific Ocean. Over the next twenty years the birds spread to three small neighbouring islands and continued to breed. When studied in the mid 1980's the finches on different islands were found to have different beak shapes. This could not have been produced by random mutations in only 20 years. However it could have happened if changes in the diet merely activated or deactivated genes that controlled the size of beak and jaws.⁴ Such non-evolutionary adaptation is the most likely explanation of Darwin's Galapagos finches.



How Many Species?

Darwin collected what he regarded as 9 finch species during his voyage on the Beagle (1831-1836). These finches were classified as separate species based on their beak shape, size, colour, feeding etc. Darwin's argument sounded so good, no-one bothered to test it by seeing if they were really separate and could not interbreed and produce fertile offspring.

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