

WELCOME to a Distinctly Dawkins Do plus some synthetic life and more as you read Evidence News for May 2010 with EDitorial COMment from the Creation Research team around the world. You will get a good laugh, particularly when the world's best known Atheist comments on Australia's Critters, since the two chief editors of this publication are Aussies.

In Chapter 11 of *The Greatest Show on Earth* Richard Dawkins describes a series of what he considers to be defective designs in animal and human bodies and concludes: "The overwhelming impression you get from surveying any part of the innards of a large animal is that it is a mess! ... a decent designer would never have perpetrated *anything* of the shambles that is the criss-crossing maze of arteries, veins, nerves, intestines, wads of fat and muscle, mesenteries and more." (p371, emphases in original)

So what are the specific examples of "unintelligent design" used by Dawkins as evidence that animals and humans must have evolved by chance random processes because no Creator would make such dreadful mistakes? Read on and enjoy.

Evidence News comes to you in PDF format so you need Adobe Reader which is freely available from www.adobe.com. This week's Evidence News Index follows - to view the entire e-news please click <http://www.creationresearch.net/enews/ENEWS0410-100526-Design-Dawkins.pdf> (if the link doesn't work just copy and paste it into your web browser).

(Please Note: within the PDF file you can click on the Index Line to go directly to the news item.)

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1. USA – TWO WEEKS OF FOSSIL TRIPS: October 11th-15th or 18th-22nd 2010. Book now for a week of wonderful Bible teaching and fossil tripping in Tennessee's magnificent Cumberland Plateau in October. Join John Mackay, Robert Stewart and Robert Powell for the real evidence on Noah's Flood and Creation. *Cost:* 1 person \$160, married couple \$280, married couple with one child \$350; with two children \$400, with three children \$450, four or more children \$500 (maximum cost). *Contact Email:* clcstaff@cedarlakecamp.org. *Find Registration Form:* www.cedarlakecamp.org (go to the "Camps" page and find the OCTOBER link).

2. FOURTEEN DAY GREAT AUSSIE OUTBACK TOUR in August – ONLY 11 SEATS LEFT so check out details on www.creationresearch.net HOME PAGE left.

3. UP A GUM TREE WITH A DOWN POUCH: Dawkins notes that the koala pouch "opens downwards, instead of upwards as in a kangaroo." This is "not a good idea in an animal that spends its time clinging to tree trunks." Dawkins' explanation for this apparent anomaly is: "Koalas are descended from a

wombat like ancestor. Wombats are champion diggers.” He then goes on to explain that it has not been possible for evolution to change the back facing wombat pouch into a forward facing one. Dawkins suggests “the embryological upheaval attendant on such a major change would render the intermediates even worse off than the koala coping with the existing state of affairs.” (Dawkins, *Greatest Show*, pp 369-370)

ED. COM. Since us Aussies who live with koalas in our backyards don't ever worry about “drop bears” hitting us on the heads when we walk under gum trees, perhaps some local knowledge will help. It is obvious that Dawkins' faith in evolution as the explanation for all things is rather limited as he is able to believe evolution could turn the wombat pouch around when it was evolving from a possum-like creature with front facing pouch, so that the wombat pouch does not fill with dirt while it digs burrows. But evolution has not been able to do the reverse when the wombat evolved into a tree climbing Koala. Dawkins ignores the fact that a back facing pouch is also a good idea for a gum tree climber. Koalas have short legs, so when they climb trees their abdomens are close to the surface of the tree, if not actually scraping it. If the koala pouch opened upwards the pouch would collect bark and other detritus as the koala moved about the tree. When they are not moving (which is most of the time) they sit, well supported, in forks of trees, rather than spending their time “clinging to tree trunks”. And lastly the koala pouch is well equipped with a strong muscle around the opening to keep it closed so the babies are not in danger of falling out, Dawkins should consider the whole animal, including its behaviour, not just one feature when assessing what is good and bad design. (Ref. marsupials, mammals, reproduction)

4. “SCIENTISTS CREATE SYNTHETIC LIFE” is the headline of an article ABC (Australia) News in Science 21 May 2010, about an experiment also reported in BBC News, 20 May 2010, *Science Online* 20 May 2010 DOI: 10.1126/science.1190719 and *Science* vol. 328, pp. 958, 21 May 2010. A team of scientists at J. Craig Venter Institute (JCVI) in Rockville, Maryland, and San Diego, California have made an artificial chromosome and inserted it into a bacterial cell which has replicated into billions of new cells with the genetic information from the synthesised chromosome. The team started by analysing the genome of bacterium named *Mycoplasma mycoides*, used this information to construct long gene sequences from basic chemical components, and then inserted these into a yeast cell to get them to join together into a full chromosome. The newly made chromosome was then inserted into another bacterial cell named *Mycoplasma capricolum*. These bacteria then reproduced into billions of new cells using the genetic information from the newly made chromosome, so they are have been declared a new species *Mycoplasma mycoides* JCVI-syn1.0. During the original chromosome synthesis the researchers had inserted some short DNA sequences that were not in the original *M. mycoides* genome so they could check that genome of reproduced cells was derived from the synthetic chromosome. They reported in *Science*: “The only DNA in the cells is the designed synthetic DNA sequence, including “watermark” sequences and other designed gene deletions and polymorphisms, and mutations acquired during the building process. The new cells have expected phenotypic properties and are capable of continuous self-replication.” Craig Venter described the experiments as being like making new software for the cell. Maryland biophysicist David Thirumalai commented: “It is a marriage of minds, imagination and God's creation of life itself.”

ABC: <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2010/05/21/2905640.htm>

BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science_and_environment/10132762.stm

ED. COM. Venter's and Thirumalai's description of the experiment are more accurate than the ABC headline. Venter's team did something very intelligent that required a lot of creative design, but they did not create life. What they have done is to interpret genetic information already present in a bacterial chromosome, and using their understanding of DNA language they have assembled a new chromosome. However, in order to complete the chromosome assembly they had to make use of already existing yeast cells. Furthermore, the genetic information on the newly made chromosome has made new cells by using the already existing cellular machinery of the pre-existing recipient cells. This experiment reminds us that the real key to the creation of life is not the chemicals DNA is made from, but the externally designed information encoded onto the DNA chemicals as well as the existence of DNA readers, cells to protect the process and a fluid environment that is friendly to the process. Without these the DNA sequence is not life at all. The information used in this case as in all known cases is the product of a preexisting mind, and using it required creative design and clever chemical engineering. Therefore, WE PREDICT that all attempts to make new life by naturalistic or chance random evolutionary processes

will fail. If Venter's team ever make a complete cell, not just a chromosome, it will be because they used processes of creation, and will be irrefutable proof that life was created in the first place. (Ref. synthesis, abiogenesis, genetic engineering)

5. FREE ONLINE CREATION COURSE: Find out in depth how to recognize the evidence of design and creation in "The Search for The Origin of Life". Student text and Teacher Guide are available free from [here](#).

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7. A DISGRACEFUL NERVE: Dawkins describes spending a day with veterinary anatomists dissecting a young giraffe that had died in a zoo. He was particularly interested in seeing the recurrent laryngeal nerve, one of the nerves that supplies the giraffe larynx (voice box). Dawkins describes the recurrent laryngeal nerve as follows: "On each side of the neck, one of the branches of the laryngeal nerve goes straight to the larynx following a direct route such as a designer might have chosen. The other one goes to the larynx via an astonishing detour. It dives right down into the chest, loops around one of the main arteries leaving the heart (a different artery on the left and right sides, but the principle is the same), and then heads back up the neck to its destination. If you think of it as the product of design, the recurrent laryngeal nerve is a disgrace." Dawkins was interested in seeing the giraffe's recurrent laryngeal nerve because a giraffe has a particularly long neck and the larynx is a long way from its chest, but its recurrent laryngeal nerve does the same loop. (Dawkins, *Greatest Show*, pp 356, 360-362)

ED. COM. The way Dawkins writes it, a reader would assume the recurrent laryngeal nerve only controls the larynx. It does not. The nerve branches from the main trunk of the Vagus nerve in the top of the chest and supplies the trachea (windpipe) and oesophagus (food pipe) as it courses upwards through the neck. Dawkins' assertion that its circuitous route proves it wasn't created that way because an intelligent creator would not make it like that is a philosophical/theological claim, not a scientific one. It is based on Dawkins' assumptions about what he would do if he was the creator god. This assumption faces only one major challenge – giraffes work very well thank you and when Dawkins has made a better giraffe we will be interested in his opinion – at present he is just being a foolish amateur. Why the giraffe nerve has this route we don't know, but it works, and the best scientific way to find out more about the nerve is to work on the principle that it is like this for a reason, and do some further research. (Ref. neurology, cranial nerves anatomy)

8. AN IDIOTIC EYE: Dawkins asserts the vertebrate eye is particularly badly designed. He first condemns the eye for only having clear vision in the fovea (the central region of the total visual field for each eye), and therefore we need to constantly move the eye and use image processing software in the brain to see a whole scene clearly. He then directs his attention to the retina – the light sensitive layer at the back of the eye that converts light into electrical signals and sends them to the brain. According to Dawkins "the retina is back to front". He compares the eye to a digital camera with an array of light sensitive photocells and then explains: "...suppose I tell you that the eye's photocells are pointing backwards, away from the scene being looked at. The "wires" connecting the photocells to the brain run all over the surface of the retina, so the light has to pass through a carpet of massed wires before they hit the photocells. That doesn't make sense – and it even gets worse. One of the consequences of the photocells pointing backwards is that the wires that carry their data somehow have to pass through the retina and back to the brain. What they do, in the vertebrate eye, is all converge on a particular hole in the retina, where they dive through it. The hole filled with nerves is called the blind spot, because it is

blind, but 'spot' is too flattering, for it is quite large, more like a blind *patch*, which again doesn't actually inconvenience us such because of the 'automatic Photoshop' software in the brain. Once again, send it back, is not just bad design, it's the design of a complete idiot." (Dawkins, *Greatest Show*, pp353-354, emphasis in original)

ED. COM. The "back to front" retina has been a favourite topic for sceptics pouring scorn on creationists for years, but it is also the best example of fools being too quick to "denigrate that which we do not yet understand". As now we do! In 2007 a group of German scientists studied Muller cells – the cylindrical support cells that span the layers of cells in the retina. They found Muller cells acted like optical fibres conveying light from the front of the retina to the back where the photocells are. (See "Human Eyes are Badly Designed" in the Fact File on www.evidencweb.net: Click [HERE](#)). Now, a further study on the Muller cells show that they re-focus different coloured light that has been split up as it passes through the front of the eye. Amichai Labin and Erez Ribak of the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, who carried out this study, concluded: "The retina is revealed as an optimal structure designed for improving the sharpness of images." (*Physical Review Letters*, vol. 104, p158102, 16 April 2010.) It seems the retina is very well designed indeed.

In spite of this, the editors of *New Scientist* who commented on this latest retina discovery were determined not to give in and admit the retina is well designed, so they wrote an editorial claiming: "Rather than provide evidence in support of intelligent design, the new work is actually yet another example of evolution's extraordinary ability to create workaround solutions to problems arising from earlier iterations" (*New Scientist*, 6 May 2010, p3). They go on to claim the eye is still poorly designed because it has a blind spot – which Dawkins described as "the design of a complete idiot". However, as Dawkins himself admits, the blind spot (calling it a "patch" is exaggerating its size) is no inconvenience to us because the brain processes the information, in a similar way to using an image editing computer program to fill in the gaps. The brain is able to do this because we have two eyes which are constantly moving (even when we think we are keeping them still) so there is plenty of information to fill the hole in the visual field. This movement is now recognised as good design as it makes maximum use of the fovea, so it doesn't matter that the periphery does not focus as well. This constant movement, and the brain's control of it, is now being used as a model for scientists to develop better machine vision.

Dawkins should also consider the logical deduction from his correlation of the eye and brain – with digital cameras (artificial eyes) which do not make themselves and image editing software (artificial brains) which never write or make themselves. Furthermore, software is never written by the digital camera that captures the images, or by the computer that runs the image editing program. It was written by a pre-existing creative intelligence, outside the camera and computer, who knows about images and computer programs. If Dawkins doesn't come to terms with this reality, one day he will have to explain to the Creator who gave him eyes better than a digital camera, and a brain with better image editing software than *Photoshop*, why he called Him "a complete idiot." (Ref. optics, neurology, atheism)

9. DUMMY EYES: After noting that animals living in perpetual darkness have "vestiges of eyes", Dawkins asks the following question: "Given that a cave salamander lives in perpetual darkness so has no use for eyes, why would a divine creator nevertheless furnish it with dummy eyes, clearly related to eyes but non-functional?" (Dawkins, *Greatest Show*, p351)

ED. COM. In 2004 scientists studied blind cave fish with 'vestigial eyes' as well as their sighted relatives that lived in the light. They found they could get the blind fish to develop eyes when they implanted eye tissue from the sighted into a blind fish. (See "Blind Cave Fish" in our Fact File click [HERE](#))

All similar studies on real vestigial organs such as flightless beetles with tiny stumps of wings show that they are descended from winged beetles and have degenerated by loss so they are now stuck where they are living. Quite the opposite of evolution. (See "VESTIGIAL ORGANS" in the Fact File click [HERE](#)).

It would therefore seem that the real history of blind cave life is that when their sighted salamander or fish ancestors somehow got trapped in the caves they lost their original sight abilities, through degeneration not evolution. The change is real, but Dawkins and co. are determined to call all change evolution, when it's really the opposite.

It is also possible that baby salamanders, like fish, need to be exposed to light during embryological development for the eyes to fully develop, so badly formed eyes are the result of a bad cave environment, not bad design.

We hope someone does some further research on salamander eyes as we all may learn something about embryological development in general, and how eyes develop and function. (Ref. vision, vertebrates, amphibians)

10. SENSELESS SINUSES: According to Dawkins: “Another consequence of our own shift from quadruped to biped concerns the sinuses, which give grief to any of us because their drainage hole is in the very last place a sensible designer would have chosen.” He then quotes Australian science broadcaster Robyn Williams quoting Professor Derek Denton: “The big maxillary sinuses or cavities are behind the cheeks on either side of the face. They have their drainage holes in their top, which is not much of an idea in terms of using gravity to assist drainage of fluid.” (Dawkins, *Greatest Show*, p 370)

ED. COM. Sinuses have a self cleaning inner surface lining which moves fluid upwards and sideways very efficiently. They are definitely NOT designed to work using gravity. This lining is called “respiratory epithelium” and includes two specialised cells that work together. One type of cell secretes mucus, a sticky fluid that traps any bacteria and other particles in the air; the other type of cell has whip-like hairs projecting from its surface, which move in an organised fashion to transport the mucus and any trapped bugs and debris towards the nose. This conveyor belt action is an active process that does not need gravity. Sinuses only fill with fluid and cause pain when either the cilia are damaged, or the lining becomes inflamed because of infection or allergy, and secretes more fluid than the cilia can cope with.

However this is NOT the result of bad design. In the original good creation where Genesis informs us the world was watered by a mist every day (Gen 2:6) there would have been no dust to cause a problem to the sinuses and moisture in abundance to lubricate them. Since all the original bacteria were good the germ problem never occurred. It is because the air in our no-longer-good world is dry and filled with dust, chemicals and bacteria, and our no-longer-good immune systems are unable to cope. If you want to blame someone for this look in a mirror – we rebelled against our Creator (Gen 3). (Ref. paranasal sinuses, mucosa, sinusitis)

11. HOW BUTTERFLIES HEAR: According to an article in *Journal of Experimental Biology* (Vol. 212, p3533 and ScienceDaily 22 Oct 2009), insects have been found to have ears on just about any part of their body. These usually consist of a taut membrane that vibrates when exposed to sound and is connected to nerve cells. Scientists at Bristol University have studied the ears of a tropical butterfly named *Morpho peleide* that has ears located at the base of the forewings. The membrane of the ear has a dome inset into it, making it distinctively different to other insect ears. To see what effect this unusual ear structure had on what the butterfly could hear, the researchers scanned the membrane with a tiny laser beam whilst the membrane was exposed to sounds of different frequencies. They found that lower pitch sounds cause vibrations only in a part of the outer membrane while higher pitch sounds caused the entire membrane to vibrate. The researchers also made recordings of the nerve signals from different parts of the membrane. They concluded that the unusual structure of its ears enabled this butterfly to hear a wide range of sounds and is very sensitive to low pitched sounds. They suggested that sensitivity to lower pitch sounds enables the butterfly to hear the beating of birds' wings, while the ability to hear higher pitches enables it to hear birdsong. They wrote: “We suggest that this remarkable variation in structure is associated with function that provides a selective advantage, particularly in predator detection.”

ED. COM. “Selective advantage” is a typical evolutionists' non-explanation for how something came into being. The ability to hear low pitched sounds may be a selective advantage in a place where birds eat butterflies, but it does not explain where this structure and its associated nerves came from. We hope some scientists will follow up this study with one on whether having this structure really does enable butterflies to avoid being eaten by birds. WE PREDICT they will find it makes little difference since studies of other butterfly functions supposed to provide protection from predators, e.g. “eye spots” have

proven the structures actually have other functions such as courtship signals, if finding the function never explains how the structure came about. (See “Eye Spots Attract Females” in the Fact File click [HERE](#))

12. HOW BUTTERFLIES DRINK: described in *ScienceNOW: ScienceShots*. Butterflies feed using a long proboscis that looks like a straw to draw up many different fluids including water, nectar and juices in rotting fruit. However, fluid dynamics researchers have found that it actually works by capillary action, like a paper towel, rather than the pumping or sucking movement that propels liquids through a straw. This enables the butterfly to gently draw up many kinds of liquids of different densities. If it tried to use a pumping action on heavy liquids like fruit juices the extra pressure needed would cause the proboscis to burst.

ScienceShots: <http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/science-shots/>

ED. COM. How butterflies and moths evolved a feeding tube out of insect jaws is a mystery for evolution. The usual story is that insects changed their jaws into feeding tubes when flowering plants were evolving and nectar and fruit juices became available to drink. For this to be true, evolutionists would have to explain how changes in plants' genes that produced flowers also changed insect genes for mouthparts and the brain circuits that recognise flowers provide liquid food, and make them go for a drink. Furthermore, the changes had to get the proboscis right, i.e. the capillary action, in the first generation, otherwise butterflies would have lost the struggle to survive and become extinct. (Ref. design, insects, diet, Lepidoptera)

13. SMART SEEDS: described in *ScienceNOW* 12 June 2009 and *Science Roundup* 2 July 2009. David Lentink, a zoologist at Wageningen University, the Netherlands and colleagues have studied the way maple seeds are able to ‘fly’ long distances away from their parent tree. Seeds need to be able to move away from the parent tree so they can grow in a new patch of earth. On a windy day a maple seed can fly up to 1 kilometre (five eighths of a mile). They first created an artificial maple seed, ten times the size of a real seed, but with the same proportions and curves. They attached this to a robotic arm inside a container of oil and glass beads that enabled them to see the flow of fluid around it as it rotated like seeds do in the wind. They found the leading edge of the model seed formed vortices (tornado-like twisting movements) in the surrounding fluid as it moved. Such vortices help produce lift and have been found to be also produced by bats and insects wings as they fly. The researchers then tested real seeds in a wind tunnel and found the same pattern of vortices, confirming their theory that seeds use vortex enhanced flight in the same way as bats and insects. The researchers wrote: “Leading edge vortices (LEVs) also explain the high lift generated by hovering insects, bats, and possibly birds, suggesting that the use of LEVs represents a convergent aerodynamic solution in the evolution of flight performance in both animals and plants.” Steven Vogel, a biomechanist of Duke University, North Carolina commented: “People don't give plants enough credit for 'smarts’”.

ED. COM. It is no smarter to give a maple tree credit for “smarts” because it has flying seeds than it is to give the model seed used in this study credit for smarts, instead of giving the credit to those who designed and built the model. If bio-mechanists and engineers can recognise “smarts” when they see them, they have no excuse for failing to giving credit to the Creator who was smart enough to design and build aerodynamic seeds before any smart human used their inbuilt creative intelligence to copy it. (Ref. Acer, forest, angiosperm)

14. EAR INSPIRES RADIO RECEIVER: according to a report in *New Scientist*, 13 June 2009, p17. Researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology have made a computer chip “modelled on the human ear” that could be used in FM radios, cellphones, wireless internet devices and other electronic gadgets that receive radio-frequency signals. Human ears work by converting a wide range of sound waves frequencies to electric signals using a long row of hair cells that respond to different frequencies. These signals are then sent to the brain which interprets the signals from different hair cells as different sound frequencies. The MIT researchers built a “chip that creates an electromagnetic wave in response to radio frequencies. The wave activates a network of transistors that act like hair cells in the ear to reveal the wave's frequency.” The ear-inspired chip can process frequencies ranging from 600 megahertz to 8 gigahertz.

ED. COM. This is another example of the burgeoning science of biomimetics – copying the way living things work in order to achieve a purpose. It took intelligence to understand how the ear works and understand radio waves. It took creative design and engineering to put the two together and apply them to other devices that were also the product of creative design. We still do not know everything about how the ear works, but we predict whatever else we learn about the ear, it will have more in common with engineering than with chance random processes. It is foolish to claim the ear got here by chance evolution, but the ear-inspired device was created by clever designers and engineers. (Ref. electronics, hearing, transducers)

15. HUMAN GENOME A MINDLESS MESS: according to articles in *Nature News*, 3 May 2010 and *PNAS online*, 5 May 2010. John Avise of Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of California, Irvine, has written an article in *PNAS* claiming that the human genome is so full of “dysfunctional traits” that it could not possibly be designed by an intelligent creator. He writes: “Here, I highlight several outlandish features of the human genome that defy notions of ID by a caring cognitive agent. These range from de novo mutational glitches that collectively kill or maim countless individuals (including embryos and fetuses) to pervasive architectural flaws (including pseudogenes, parasitic mobile elements, and needlessly baroque regulatory pathways) that are endogenous in every human genome.” He goes on to say that the “gross imperfections” of the human genome are “consistent with the notion of nonsentient (mindless) contrivance by evolutionary forces.” He concludes: “The evolutionary-genetic sciences thus can help religions to escape from the profound conundrums of ID, and thereby return religion to its rightful realm—not as the secular interpreter of the biological minutiae of our physical existence but, rather, as a respectable philosophical counsellor on grander matters, including ethics and morality, the soul, spiritualness, sacredness, and other such matters that have always been of ultimate concern to humanity.”

In a commentary on Avise’s paper Philip Ball, writing for *Nature News*, agrees that the human genome evolved by mindless natural selection, but he issues this caution: “However — although heaven forbid that this should seem to let ID off the hook — it is worth pointing out that some of the genomic inefficiencies Avise lists are still imperfectly understood. We should be cautious about writing them off as ‘flaws’, lest we make the same mistake evident in the labelling as ‘junk DNA’ genomic material that seems increasingly to play a biological role. There seems little prospect that the genome will ever emerge as a paragon of good engineering, but we shouldn’t too quickly derogate that which we do not yet understand.”

ED. COM. Nature writer P. Ball is correct in stating that when we do not understand everything about how the genome works, it means we cannot write off anything as a useless mess. After all the same argument of uselessness was used of the appendix for so long that it became a good example of how evolutionary theory hinders scientific advance. Doing more study of the genome may show there are some parts of the genome that don’t work well, but it will be evidence that the genome has been damaged and has degenerated, i.e. it is devolving. This fits the Biblical history of the world, which tells us that everything started out very good, but has been degenerating due to human rebellion and God’s judgement.

It is also sadly pathetic to see a scientist commenting so naively on religion and morality with his assumption moral and spiritual matters have nothing to do with where we come from. Jesus Christ’s ultimate claim over mankind or that he is superior to Allah is based exclusively on the fact that He is both Creator and Redeemer (cf. John 1 and Genesis 1:1-5). As Dawkins almost correctly states; **“The central belief of Christianity is that the Creator of the universe...the inventor of Galaxies couldn’t think of a better way of ridding the world of sin than to get Himself tortured on a cross...how pathetic!” (1)**

It’s a comment Dawkins will not forget when he stands face to face with his Maker and Judge who is the Jesus who actually died to pay the penalty for mankind’s sin. (Conservative Humanist Association, Birmingham, Monday 29th September, 2008.) (Ref. genetics, Man, genes)

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