

Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.anthropology.paleo/2005-11/msg01180.html>

- *From:* "Richard Dawkins" <Dawkins@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 30 Nov 2005 00:45:26 -0700
-

"Jim McGinn" <jimmcginn@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
[news:VrKif.27715\\$tV6.5648@xx](mailto:news:VrKif.27715$tV6.5648@xx)

>

> "Paul Crowley" <slkwuoiutiuyciuyik@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote

>

>> The absence of canines in Apiths is explicable
>> in only one way — they replaced them with
>> weapons which did much the same —
>> i.e. penetrated flesh. But only a ground-sleeping
>> species would acquire and keep spears of that
>> nature.

>

> You make the shift to tools/weapons ridiculously simplistic. If it was
> this

> simple we'd expect to see it more often in the animal world. I can
> envision

> the LCA picking up and throwing rocks and waving sticks, but this would
> have

> only been effective in a symbolic manner, kind of a collective show of
> force. And, as I explain in my hypothesis, the only way this would have
> been adaptive would be in the context of the resource preservation
> territorialism, part of a strategy to survive the dry season of the late
> miocene monsoon forest habitat. This explains how the behavior would have
> started to evolve. And the group selective aspects of the same scenario
> explains how they would have eventually begun to evolve the cooperative
> and

> intellectual abilities that would, millions of years later, have enabled
> them

> to achieve such things as pointy sticks etc.

>

> You seem blissfully unaware of the conceptual difficulties associated with
> the chimp-like LCA using pointed sticks to attack predators. They were
> literally millions of years away from having such capabilities. Who was
> sharpening these sticks for them? And who was teaching them to use them
> effectively against bear-sized hyena and sabertoothed cats?

>

>>> A group of hominids with pointed sticks (i.e.

>>> spears) would defeat a leopard . . or even a lion.

Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths

>> >> Some rocks would also be handy.
>> >
>> > Only in the context of large, cooperative groups, like the communities
> of my
>> > hypothesis, would any of this be effective.
>>
>> I agree with large cooperative groups --
>> probably most often only sometimes coming
>> together to hunt down an intruding predator,
>> but then reverting to their regular internecine
>> fighting.
>
> You've provided no explanation of the SELECTIVE origin of large
> cooperative
> groups. You just tack it on and hope nobody notices that you just tacked
> it
> on. The same is true for your, "regular internecine fighting." You just
> tack it on. There's nothing about your island isolation scenario that
> would
> predict this.
>
> Also, without a group selective scenario you have no basis for the
> emergence
> of communicativeness, culture, and intellect. And without this you don't
> even have the basis for your pointy stick scenario.
>
>> >> > They couldn't do this quadrupedally? Chimps currently fight each
> other
>> >> > without weapons. Not much incentive for such a tremendous shift in
>> >> > morphology. This is hardly better than AAT logic.
>> >
>> >> The first hominids fought with weapons.
>> >> That was why they could not be quadrupedal.
>> >
>> > In my hypothesis I explain why weapons first became adaptive. You just
>> > leave it to the readers imagination.
>>
>> No, I don't. When individuals had to carry around
>> a club at all times -- and be able to wield it with
>> effect on occasion -- the selective pressure in
>> favour of bipedalism was intense. Those who
>> could do it better than others lived, the rest
>> died. Clubs were the first weapons. But for
>> tackling predators, they'd have switched to
>> spears.
>
> Hominids employ weapons because they have the intelligence and collective
> knowledge necessary to employ them effectively (And much of this
> effectiveness is dependent on large groups). You somehow, in your
> desperation, have allowed yourself to assume that chimps could achieve
> this.

Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths

> This is nothing but desperation inspired wishful thinking.
>
>> > The problem is that the reader is
>> > going to start to wonder that if it is as easy as you suggest why don't
> a
>> > lot of other species start using weapons.
>>
>> It's not easy. The adjustments were huge. Which
>> other species have the capacity for bipedalism?
>> How many others can retain their weapons at
>> all times. Chimps can't. When you have to climb
>> a tree -- or if you want to run fast -- you have to
>> drop your club.
>
> I agree. The adjustments are huge. And in my scenario it takes millions
> of
> years of group selective oriented communal territorialism to get an animal
> that can even begin to achieve what you have the LCA achieving out of the
> gate. And the only explanation you provide is one that requires us to
> tack
> on a bunch of behaviors the selective benefits of which are not apparent
> in
> your scenario.
>
>> >> Carrying weapons is not compatible with
>> >> tree-living. So tree-living has to end first.
>> >> That is only possible in the absence of
>> >> predators.
>> >
>> > You've provided no reason for them to begin carrying weapons.
>>
>> No especial reason is necessary. Chimps
>> use them occasionally now. But their tree-
>> living way of life does not allow their use to
>> become habitual. They can't retain clubs in
>> their possession.
>
> Apith lived in trees.
>
>> > This is not left to chance in my scenario.
>>
>> You create some far-fetched fantasy -- while
>> ignoring ever practical difficulty that would
>> have arisen.
>
> Such as?
>
>> > There is absolutely nothing in your scenario that would begin to select
> for
>> > the kind of communalism and communal territorialism that is in my
> scenario

Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths

>> > and that is reflected in the behaviors of extant humans. It is just
> tacked
>> > on.
>>
>> There is no need for anything special.
>> Hominid communities, surrounded by
>> predator-occupied territory, and tending
>> towards war whenever not under pressure,
>> will almost inevitably evolve towards greater
>> complexity. Those best at it, will win out
>> over those not so good.
>
> Now it seems like you are assuming my scenario. But you've left out a lot
> of details. You haven't indicated a dry season. Without it war is not
> adaptive. With a dry season you have another problem, competition from
> food
> competitors. Remember now, these early hominids were not the ecologically
> dominant creatures that us humans are now. If they didn't have some means
> o
> f dealing with food competitors (which were much more numerous back then
> than they are now) then the depletion of resources during the dry season
> would result in famine. Under conditions of famine their cooperative war
> activity would break down into an every-apith-for-himself scenario. The
> end
> result would be easy pickings for the predators.
>
>> >> What is 'contrived'. Don't islands like Zanzibar exist?
>> >> Haven't such islands been a very common
>> >> throughout geological history?
>> >
>> > Islands are not the engine of speciation that you suggest. Islands
> don't
>> > create new niches on the mainland.
>>
>> They facilitate the gradual adaptation to, and
>> exploitation of, such mainland niches.
>
> What makes you think this?
>
>> At least
>> I have a (fairly) clear account of this niche -- with
>> a focus on coastal sites, off-shore where possible,
>> but often based on peninsulas. You are still lost
>> in the nonsense of the ancient savanna model --
>> with its mainland niche from the start -- curiously
>> entirely empty for the last million years or so --
>> and with its ridiculous intermediate stage of
>> bipedal tree-sleeping hominids, all of whom
>> conveniently go extinct as soon as your theory
>> no longer needs them to be around.
>

Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths

> Extraneous nonsense. If you can't explain the emergence of a hominid
> niche
> on mainland then you don't have a hypothesis.
>
>> >> > This couldn't be achieved quadrupedally?
>> >
>> >> No. The ability to use weapons and tools
>> >> (and even carry rocks over distance) is not
>> >> compatible with quadrupedalism.
>> >
>> > But you've provided no reason for them to begin using weapons and
>> > tools.
>>
>> No reason is needed. Chimps (and other
>> species) show the capacity now. But, being
>> tree-living, they can never develop it.
>> [..]
>
> The communal territorialism of my scenario provides a smooth upramp to
> sophisticated tool usage. You can't make the same claim. You put pointy
> sticks in the hands of chimps and pit them against social hunters like
> bear-sized hyena and sabertoothed cats. This is blatant nonsense. This
> is
> not even remotely plausible.
>
>> > It's not possible for me to agree with Jason since he seems to
>> > not know what he thinks or why he thinks it.
>>
>> That's his job. He's paid to be stupid. If he
>> had anything between his ears, he'd never
>> have got it — nor wanted it. If (somehow)
>> he ever got an idea, he'd be drummed out
>> of the 'profession'. It hates ideas, and has
>> created an ethos that destroys all possibility
>> of any member having them.
>
> You're exactly right on this point.
>
>> It's bit like
>> professional Astronomy around 1630, or
>> Geology in the 1960s — locked into systems
>> that are going nowhere, and which must
>> treat all ideas as dangerous and heretical.
>
> Yes, exactly the same thing. But it's important not to dismiss this as an
> aberration. This is the way social institutions are SUPPOSED to work.
> Ironic isn't it? The pope didn't put Gallileo under house arrest for
> reasons that are arbitrary. He did it because his ideas had the ability
> to
> undermine the belief systems that were the glue maintained a societies
> integrity. And a society's integrity is essential to the survival of

Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths

> itself
> and its members in the context of the militaristic realities of human
> existence. The same is true presently.

>
"Species that were once thought to have turned into others have been found to overlap in time with these alleged descendants. In fact, the fossil record does not convincingly document a single transition from one species to another." (Stanley, S.M., *The New Evolutionary Timetable: Fossils, Genes, and the Origin of Species*, 1981, p. 95)

• *Follow-Ups:*

- ◆ *Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths*
◇ *From: Jim McGinn*

• *References:*

- ◆ *Absence of Canines in Apiths*
◇ *From: Jim McGinn*

- Prev by Date: *Re: A *Dry* Discussion About The Origin Of Bipedalism*
- Next by Date: *Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths*
- Previous by thread: *Absence of Canines in Apiths*
- Next by thread: *Re: Absence of Canines in Apiths*
- Index(es):
 - ◆ *Date*
 - ◆ *Thread*