Re: Humans as scavengers

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- *From*: floyd@xxxxxxxxxx (Floyd L. Davidson)
- *Date*: Tue, 16 Jan 2007 04:56:45 −0900

"Paul Crowley" <slkwuoiutiuytciuyik@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

> "Floyd L. Davidson" <floyd@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
> news:871wlvhbun.fld@xxxxxxxxxxxxx
>
> > "How come you cannot provide ONE single example of human
> > population that DOES ANY scavenging of rotten meat ?"
> >
> > As was quoted in each of your responses, including the article
> > to which I am replying. As we have noted, the definition of
> > "rotten" is open to debate, but I don't think Crowley intended
> > that to be the sticking point.
>
> It is the sticking point. Some (or most) of the
> predators in Africa scavenge on carcases
> eating meat that would be inedible to humans
> (no matter how 'culturally adapted' they could
> become). Crocodiles and vultures are probably
> the most extreme examples, with hyenas and
> dogs not too far behind them.

All of those animals eat fresh meat.

> The question is why humans are not closer
> to (say) dogs in this respect, IF they evolved
> to be scavengers.

The difference between canines and humans is that one is very specialized (almost 100% carnivore) and the other is not (omnivore).

Canines do not chew anything, and digest food mostly with intestinal bacterial action. A canine basically has to eat the same kind of protein today that it did yesterday, or it cannot

digest what it eats. Hence if you change brands of dog food, your dog may not want to eat the new stuff, and will very likely suffer diarrhea when it does eat it. It may take a couple weeks to develop the right intestinal bacteria before the dog can digest the new food.

Canines, as with some other animals, may have less difficulty digesting some types of "meat" (oily food, such as the brains or cold water fish) unless it is at least partially processed by bacteria. They can digest almost anything easier of it is first processed; which is no different than humans.

Humans chew foods and use acid and enzymes for digestion more than bacteria. Humans can digest a variety that changes with each meal.

Just as with canines though, humans often have to process some foods in order to digest them. Bacterial actions is suitable, except we can't tolerate many of the toxins released by some bacteria (a problem that canines don't have). Hence instead of commonly processing with bacteria, humans more often eat food that is processed by fermentation, by enzyme action, or by heat.

Canines of course do not have the intelligence to intentionally process meat in as many ways as humans do, but they can also digest those foods easier than strictly raw food.

> In fact, in this respect, they have scarcely moved from the chimp level. In other words, there has been NO selection in the direction of a capacity to consume "older meat".

Is that of any particular significance?

> The 'scavenging hypothesis' is defeated.

It doesn't appear to me that a "scavenging hypothesis" requires the ability to eat meat that has been decomposing due to bacterial action.

The fact that humans are able to eat a much greater variety of food types than are carnivores is what restricts humans from eating bacterial processed food. That is assisted by human intelligence, which allows food to be processed by other than bacterial action.

If evolution has occurred, it would have been away from

bacterial processing since the time that humans began to use fire as a tool, at least. How long has that been?

And even before that humans might have had the intelligence to store meat in ways that would cause processing for easier digestion. Various animals do that, though most of them in ways that encourages bacterial action rather than not. But it is entirely possible that humans at a very early stage would have been storing food in ways that encouraged fermenting, drying, or enzyme action rather than bacterial action. That too would have been a starting point for evolution away from the ability to tolerate bacterial toxins.

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