

# Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.anthropology.paleo/2008-10/msg00019.html>

---

- *From:* Paul Crowley <[crowleyx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:crowleyx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Thu, 02 Oct 2008 11:05:25 +0100
- 

Claudius Denk wrote:

the absence of predators enabled huge changes in behaviour,

Speculative nonsense.

Take a look around you sometime, at birds and wild mammals. When a predator arrives on the scene the prey animals start to behave in a very different manner. Likewise for large primates. Lions, hyenas (and leopards at night) keep chimps in trees. Once they are completely absent, the chimps can move away from trees suitable for sleeping.

I don't dispute this.

Read your own post. What were you trying to dispute?

I don't know why you think I do. And since you keep snipping the context it seems you don't care to be clear.

You can always restore what you regard as "the context".

including sleeping on the ground and the ability to retain tools and weapons almost indefinitely.

## Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

Absurd assumption.

Try to be more articulate (and it is NOT an assumption it is a conclusion drawn from the evidence).

You don't get it. You have to construct a selective scenario. And in the scenario you have to explain to us why the variants of the population that (as with chimps) do not habitually (indefinitely) retain tools/weapons would have, generally, died childless while those that do habitually (indefinitely) retain tools/weapons would have, generally, survived and had offspring. (And, obviously, you will never be able to do this.)

I have done this often. And it's not hard. Try to imagine what would happen when one group (of proto-hominids) which had weapons had a fight with a group without weapons. Might some 'selection' appear to operate?

What happened in 19th century California, when local indians (without guns) came up against whites (with guns)? Do you now see many native Indians in California?

Those brought about the need for larger groups,

"Brought the need" for larger groups? How do you expect anybody to take statements like this seriously? This is a vague, worthless statement.

It is simply a continuation of the line of reasoning.

The only reason that matters in a selective scenario is who lives and who dies and why. You don't have any of that

When europeans moved to North America, they nearly always had larger numbers in any particular locality (with their more intensive farming, and ability to infect local Indians with their diseases).

Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

Did those larger numbers have an effect on the native population?

Chimp groups are remarkably small for a primate or a mammal — relying on one alpha male to control both males and females. Once the taxon was out of the chimp niche, into a different habitat (of more wide-open spaces) it would have been very unlikely that it would have been able to maintain that unusual social structure.

Speculative nonsense.

This seems to be the limit of your capacity to 'argue'.

In a violent and dangerous species, groups with large numbers are always desirable, but limited resources will inhibit them.

Here you go with the vague rhetoric again. "Always desirable?" You don't get it. You have to tell us why those with large group traits survive while those without died. See my hypothesis for a perfect example of following this standard approach.

This does not need stating — to anyone who has any knowledge of biology — or of human history. Larger groups DO tend to dominate, and then wipe out, smaller ones. Ask most Europeans for their opinions of Germans.

If there was truly a selective/situational factor that "brought the need" for larger groups you wouldn't have to state such.  
It would be apparent in your scenario.

It is apparent in my scenario.  
I only state it because you ask me to.

It's not apparent in your scenario or I wouldn't have had to ask.

Sorry, I had not realised how completely ignorant

Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

you were of all nature and all human history.

You have chimps who start carrying weapon on a regular basis for no apparent reason

Nope -- it's the same reason as peasants in Afghanistan and Somalia wear Kalashnikovs. It is dangerous to be seen without them.

Why, there are no predators. And there is no conflict over resources. why would they bother?

Do you really think that there are no disputes over resources in places like Afghanistan and Somalia? Or that such disputes as do occur have nothing to do with resources?

and you have them forming larger groups for no apparent reason.

I have explained the reasons numerous times.

Your reason have to involve biological selection.

My reasons are, of course, based entirely on selection.

And it all stems from your simplistic notion that being able to sleep on the ground, supposedly, enables/allows this behavior.

There is no reason to get complicated. All agree that the hominid taxon started to sleep on the ground at some point. But you (just like standard PA) prefer to think it was an insignificant event undertaken at no particular time for no particular reason, involving no change in habitat, nor in morphology nor in any other behaviour.

Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

IMO, it occurred after they became ecologically dominant in treed habitat (HE).

As I said, you think it was an insignificant event undertaken at no particular time for no particular reason, involving no change in habitat, nor in morphology nor in any other behaviour.

There is every reason to believe that they'd do exactly the opposite from what you're stating because there is no selective penalty from breaking off.

I don't get this. The penalty (for one or a few individuals) would, of course, be huge. Death would be rapid for any isolated person or a small group.

This is clear to you and you only. You need to make the details of this clear to your audience. Where are the details. Why wouldn't individuals just hide in the trees?

Absurd. Don't you think that the local population (which had driven them out) would see them? If those trees had fruit, or other edible matter, the locals would come looking for it.

What follows was cut and pasted from previous posts of mine. Pay particular attention to the phrase, "losers or insipient losers."

I have no idea why you think any of it is relevant. And it's "incipient".

\*\*\*\*\*

I've discussed this subject more extensively in other posts.

The nature of the selective process that this amounts to is auto-catalytic (self-propelled). In other words the evolution of the resulting homonid species that would have been the result of this unique selective

## Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

process

would have caused them to, eventually, break free from the niche that normally holds in check the continued evolution of a species.

What is an "auto-catalytic (self-propelled) selective process. I'll repeat

a quote by Richard Alexander that explains it: "At some point in their

evolution humans obviously began to cooperate to compete, specifically

against like groups of conspecifics, this intergroup competition becoming

increasingly elaborate, direct, and continuous until it achieved the ubiquity with which it has been exhibited in modern humans throughout recorded history across the entire face of the earth (Alexander, 1990)."

And, ". . . the necessity of dealing continually with our fellow humans in

social circumstances that became ever more complex and unpredictable as the

human line evolved (Alexander, 1990)."

Human evolution is the result of an intraspecies, socially oriented, auto-catalytic, selective process. He was mistaken, however, in his assumption that only if our ancestors first had achieved ecological dominance could they have actualized this autocatalytic selective process.

He was also mistaken not to make a more comprehensive analysis of the environmental factors (paleoclimatic factors) that were in effect during the

earliest years of hominid evolution. If he had he may have eventually

figured out how our earliest chimpanzee-like ancestors actualized an autocatalytic selective process despite the fact they were unable to achieve

ecological dominance.

It's also important to understand why Alexander assumed that only through

ecological dominance could our ancestors have achieved an autocatalytic

selective process. The thinking that underlies this assumption is not

without its merits. Alexander correctly surmised that in order for an

autocatalytic process to be actualized there had to have been some means by

which the "losers or insipient losers" of any such socially oriented

## Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

selective scenario couldn't just walk away without losing even bigger. In other words, Alexander realized that a necessary component of any such socially oriented, autocatalytic, selective process had to have involved the participants having little choice but to participate, with the only alternative being sure and certain death. But Alexander was mistaken to assume that only through ecological dominance could this prerequisite be realized.

\*\*\*\*\*

[..]

What are you talking about? All significant resources available to the hominids would be exploited by the established (and constantly warring) groups

Perfectly absurd. This could never happen with a starting population of chimps (and no predators).

What, on earth, are you talking about? Chimps, like ALL other species, generally MAXIMIZE their numbers in any particular location. There will not usually be anything to spare.

-- the food, the shelter, the water, etc. Groups would sometimes be forced to leave -- as the result of conflict, drought, etc. But they would nearly always soon die.

Why?

They would find little to eat, and they would be attacked by the local hominids -- or the local predators. IF hominid life was possible for such a group -- then that space in the ecology would ALREADY have been occupied by the dominant local population.

You seem to have no grasp whatever of ecology -- and to be as dumb as standard PA types.

Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

## Re: Born To Run: What Humans Really Evolved To Do

Some  
would have headed up into the dry dusty highlands,  
and it is their remains that now lead PA dopes to  
imagine a 'savanna hominid'.

Why wouldn't they stay in the trees. That's where the food is.

If there is food in the trees, then it is "owned" by  
the local population of hominids -- who would see any  
taking of it as "theft".

Paul.