Re: Generic Dog ancestor

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From: mikelist (*mutterer_at_notime*)
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Philip Deitiker wrote:

> Dog behaviors are under selection, willingly or unwillingly.
> If you take 6 dogs and put them in a pin, 3 of the dogs dig holes out
> of their pins and run out on the street and get hit by a car, then
> this selects dogs behavior. If you take a wolf and put him in a cage
> even one raise from birth, chances are he will not stay there without
> great effort on your part. If you put him in the cage and you live in
> that cage, engage in hunts, and participate in wolf−like activities
> you might have half a chance. Dogs also have this spirit, but they
> manage to suppress it, particularly as they age.

I believe I made the distinction between evolution and selective breeding. That is exactly my point. Dogs only had to change their some of their wolf behaviors, a short, environmentally guided occurrence. I think that the midden is the key to this. and I believe that for some period of time, there was a scavenger midden−wolf. This wolf would be identical to ther wolves in terms of physiognomy, though perhaps at the small end of the size range, not having many generations occur between the time they started defending their food supply and the point where humans noticed their utility, which would be the dawn of the dog. That's pretty much the scenario I'm asserting.

> There was an observation made, I don't know by whom, but for each
> species of animals there is a percentage that will die as a result of
> the transition to captivity, anxioty of being removed and placed in
> another habitat at some critical part of life. Certainly if you catch
> younger animals who have not imprinted on their social group, you
> have a better chance for survival. Another example, gorillas make
> poor parents in captivity, of course over time one would select for
> gorillas that make good parents in captivity.

I'm not sure that I subscribe to the idea that a stable percentage won't tolerate captivity, although some species like okapi, don't do well in general. I agree that the younger the animal is deprived of or supplemented species−appropriate socialization, the better they seem to handle boxed−uppedness.

> There is a certain belief that humans did not select dogs
> initially, but wolves desired to be around humans. In a hunt for
> example animals could be wounded and may not have died or escaped
> humans, and wolves may have tracted these animals and killed them.
> Later they may have even engaged in the hunts themselves. Somewhere
> along the lines they had to loose their fear of humans and learn to
> take cues via a different means of communication than in wolves.
> Therefore the dog getting hit by a car analogy does not really apply
> in this case.

This would also be the case in the scenario I suggest. Extreme climates that wouldn't allow any but the very fittest individuals to survive even with extensive scavenging. The first less fit individuals would be reduced to scavenging from a midden which is where the fork occurs. Presuming a midden or possibly several in proximity provided enough to sustain several generations, which would give that pack or packs a semi−territorial interest in protecting it, leading up to an incident where the midden−wolves chase off or kill a large predator that has been killing the local humans. A mythos has been created,why did those wolves help us? Note that none of this involves any real regard for the humans. But it would have gotten the proverbial foot in the door.

> In the case of cats, cats can take or leave humans, well at least
> the more robust breeds can, a siamese seems pretty dependent on human
> attention. But cats function over the last 500 years is that of a
> true reciprocal altruist relationship. Humans provide shelter and
> some protection (biggest risk to a cat is a larger carnivore) and the
> cat consumes disease carrying rodents. In this circumstance that cats
> are free to roam between places to find areas where the rodent
> population could support them, and as long as their diet is not
> supplimented by the host, their numbers will reflect the rodent
> population. In natural pesticide processes however the host generally
> suppliments the diet of the pesticidal agent to make sure that the
> number of eyes hunting exceed the number of pests prowling about, but
> at some level the hunting eyes stop and become conch potatoes. So the
> host regulates the supplimental food supply to control excesses of
> natural pesticides. One can see that cats are then regulated by host,
> but neccesarily controlled by host, and if the pest food supply in
> plentiful and competitors or threats minimal they can, and do expand
> into the wild, this has caused problems on isolated islands.

Early cats had to be vetted for aggressiveness too, leading up to a permanent change in behavior of those lines that were suitable.

> I suppose some dogs could survive as ferrel. Dingos certainly have,
> and alaskan dogs probably could. But most dogs are dependent on
> humans for food supply either directly or indirectly, and most would
> get themselves killed without human intervention. Certainly they
> could interbreed with wild populations, and those hybrids could
> survive in the wild, where a wolf might survive (IOW very few
> places). This may explain poodle DNA in wolves?

Feral dogs exist in packs, sometimes interacting with coyotes. In
Michigan, they are a significant problem to deer and livestock, as well
as small game animals. These packs must certainly suffer losses, but
seem to be able to thrive. Some breeds would be impractical as feral,
but most medium sized dogs are capable of catching and killing something
suitable to eat, especially after a bit of practice.

> *By the way, any changes that occur as a result of human captivity*
> *are not natural, by definition the selection is artificial, whether*
> *intentional or not. You can take for instance coat hair color in*
> *goats. Such colors may appear in the wild but are selected against*
> *because of predation, in captivity predators are limited, and thus*
> *lack of selection allows certain hair colors. The traits are not*
> *artificial, but their frequency in the population is artificial.*
> *Natural selection confers that the ecological balance of nature*
> *exacted through selection such as predator/prey relationships*
> *maintains gene frequencies and escorts evolution over time. If*
> *natural selection is removed and replaced by human managment, then*
> *the deviations from the wild population overtime are artificial in*
> *nature.*

As I read the article, and in the Discovery channel special I saw, a
connection was made between adrenalin manufacture and melanin
distribution. That would agree with seeing wild piebald goats or other
non−typical coat variations, kind of proportionally to the threat of
predation, which could plausibly coincide with a diminished f/f response
in a relatively predator free environment.

> *More philosophically, the nature of humans as a species of animals*
> *revolves around our ability to interact within ecological*
> *circumstances with approximately the same control as any other*
> *animals. As humans have breeched those circumstances over time we*
> *have altered ourselves in such a way as to create a completely new*
> *modality, like the first mammal species, or the first reptile*
> *species. The lever which we control our fate is culture, and it is*
> *interesting to speculate when we stopped being rank and file mammals*
> *and started being a new class of vertebrates. But the destiny of*
> *humans actually lies in our ability to recognize what we are, in*
> *essence the person who defines artificial selection abstractly has*
> *defined the new order of animals which we exist, whereas the*
> *individuals who first began domesticating animals becomes the*
> *empericist.*

Sounds like a win−win situation. My thinking is that the dog was the
first selectively (though not deliberately) bio−engineered species.
Empiricism probably fostered following that up with cattle and other
now−domsticated animals. I recently found out that two of the South
American camellids found as wild populations are deliberately bred from
two of the other camellids. I believe that the llama and alpaca breeds
are the result of vicuna and guanaco interbreeding, although I may have
the types of animals wrongly identified. The development of maize/corn,

with its radically different seed generation is another human development, probably based on that same observation.

> *From an abstract point of view, recognizing that dogs are*
> *domesticant of wolves, cats of wild cats, allows humans then to test*
> *their ability to domesticate a large variety of animals, from bats to*
> *Discus, to scorpions, then E. coli, viruses, the we become masters of*
> *their enzymes, which we use to manipulate DNA, and of course now*
> *we are directly changing many species. Realizing what we are is*
> *powerful, and in this regard specimen that are capable of realizing*
> *the power of humans may be the ones that survive and those that fail*
> *to do so may go extinct. This is becoming true in wild populations as*
> *well as in domesticated populations, and in places of the world where*
> *animals attack humans, the perpetrating animals are euthanized, the*
> *remnant population is changed, they become shy around humans and*
> *avoid human contact.*

A problem is that the aggressiveness factor can be complicated by hunger or mating impulses, so bears probably can't breed themselves into a more friendly group.

> *In other instances, certain animals, such as birds and squirrels*
> *there is a selection for a bravado around humans. A squirrel would*
> *never knowingly let himself get withing 100 feet of an Owl for*
> *example can be foraging behind a park bench right next to where*
> *humans are feeding birds waiting for a moment to take his fill. There*
> *was a squirrel that was so brave he used to harass my neighbor for*
> *food, unfortunately he was too brave, and I am not into feeding wild*
> *animals unless it is to get rid of a pest. The birds learn to live*
> *under the eves of houses, take dog food from bowls, eat seed and*
> *bread crumbs left close by, and generally if you sit still for more*
> *than a few moments you will find them creeping up behind you. These*
> *animals are not a threat to humans, and don't see humans as*
> *predators, but as a food supply, overtime there bravado could evolve*
> *until the are innately capable of feeding direct from the hand of*
> *humans.*

Raptors are a trump card, there was even a species in New Zealand that was large enough to prey on the local people (Haachst's Eagle). Squirrels don't have very many predators on the ground, if they can get to a tree they generally have the advantage over potential predators, except those who are equipped to attack them while in the tree. They also tolerate a dogs, though that depends on the interest the dogs shows in them. The fact that one individual squirrel can be trained to be hand−fed shows that such a thing is possible on a species wide basis, given a selective breeding or breeding control mechanism.

> *IOW, by our very nature of what we are we cannot help but interfere*
> *in the evolution of other animals, and the closer we are to those*
> *animals the more likely and faster we are to interfere with their*
> *evolution. The result of that interferance has to be filtered through*

> *the biology of the animal itself, the relationship of humans to the*
> *niche occupied by that animal, and the desire and needs of humans. In*
> *the case of the fox, we desired to see how long it would take to make*
> *a dog of a fox, and the result is dog like patterns in the fox.*
> *A better experiment would have been to take a pack of full grown*
> *grizzley bears and see how long it would take to make a st.bernard*
> *out of them, lol.*

Not sure where this is coming from, foxes are also canids closely enough related to wolves and dogs to have a significant percentage of viable offspring, ergo these foxes are dogs, newly generated. Read about chihuahua dogs, you may be surprised at what you find.

Alternatively take a pack of wild coyotes, who can
> *easily revert back to the wild and endure human presense with*
> *defiance, and see how well the domestication experiment goes (maybe*
> *they could turn them into something that could track down and kill*
> *these damn wild pigs these morons released over south and east*
> *Texas).*

As far as domesticating coyotes, all predictors suggest that it would be feasible, but what's the point? It might be easier to domesticate the wild pigs that couldn't be killed outright. Some of the original wolf traits are still present in most dogs, outbreeding back to wolves would likely dilute the developed 'dogness' to the point that they would be again unsuitable as human companions, in a very few generations.