

Creation Resource Sheet

## TRANSITION FOSSILS?

*The number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed on the earth, (must) be truly enormous. Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory.*

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*

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### Introduction

Does the fossil record show an evolutionary record of transition from one kind of life to another? What about claimed transition forms? Are creationists quoting out of context when we cite evolutionists admitting an absence of transition forms?

The problem is worse than Darwin thought:

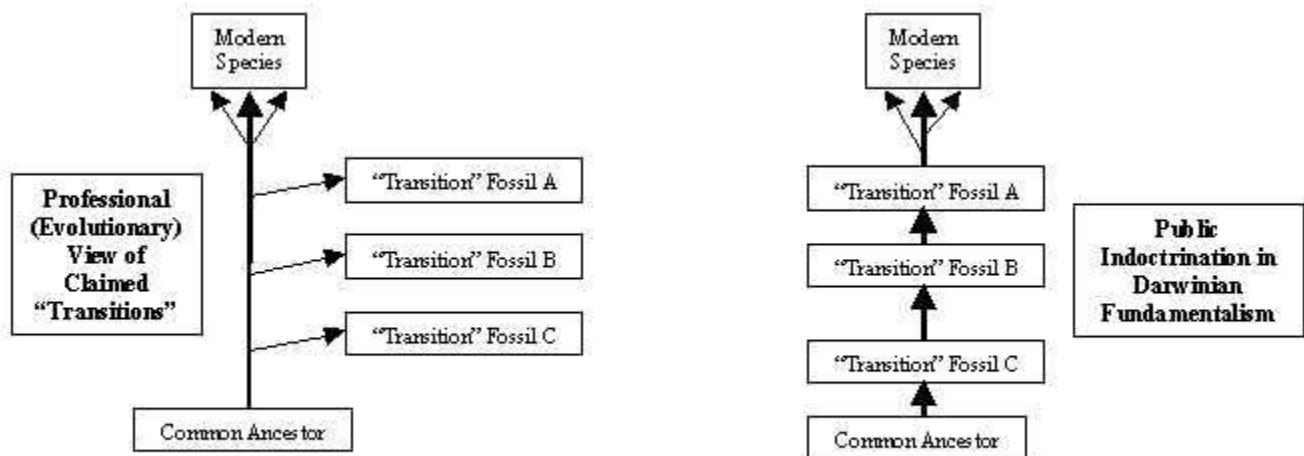
*The record of evolution is still surprisingly jerky and, ironically, we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we had in Darwin's time. By this I mean that the classic cases of darwinian change in the fossil record, such as the evolution of the horse in North America, have had to be modified or discarded as a result of more detailed information. What appeared to be a nice simple progression when relatively few data were available now appears to be much more complex and less gradualistic. (Raup)*

Contrary to the impression given by evolutionary books and magazines, evidence of transition is rare and limited to variation within kinds. Sensationalistic claims of 'evolutionary ancestors' make it into the newspapers; retractions and more sober evaluations of new fossils do not. As Dr. Colin Patterson, a senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History, put it:

*I fully agree with your comments on the lack of direct illustration of evolutionary transitions in my book. If I knew of any, fossil or living, I would certainly have included them. You suggest that an artist should be used to visualise such transformations, but where would he get the information from? I could not, honestly, provide it... Gradualism is a concept I believe in, not*

*just because of Darwin's authority, but because my understanding of genetics seems to demand it. Yet Gould and the American Museum people are hard to contradict when they say there are no transitional fossils... It is easy enough to make up stories of how one form gave rise to another, and to find reasons why the stages should be favoured by natural selection. But such stories are not part of science, for there is no way of putting them to the test.* (correspondence w. Sunderland)

The following graphic helps explain why scientists say the number of transition forms ranges from few to none, yet Darwinists claim to have many transition forms. In evolutionary theory an ancestral species may give rise to numerous living species (different branches of the evolutionary tree) as well as numerous species that have since gone extinct. A true transition form would be on the central branch of this evolutionary lineage, between the presumed ancestral species and modern life. If extinct life is highly specialized and distinct experts believe the fossils in question are a *side* branch and not the transitions they are seeking. This is particularly true when it has different features from those shared by all purported descendants of the proposed ancestor. It is dishonest to "fudge" these purported side branches and present them to the public as if they were true transition forms when the experts believe otherwise. From a creationary perspective such distinct extinct life forms were unique, unrelated creatures.

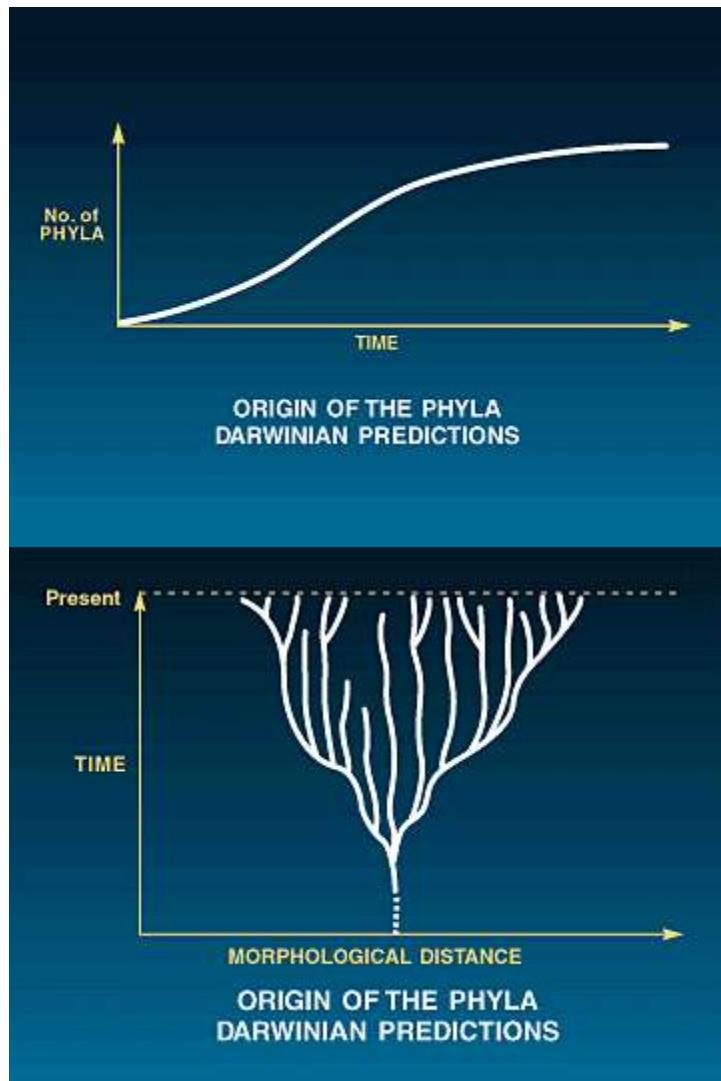


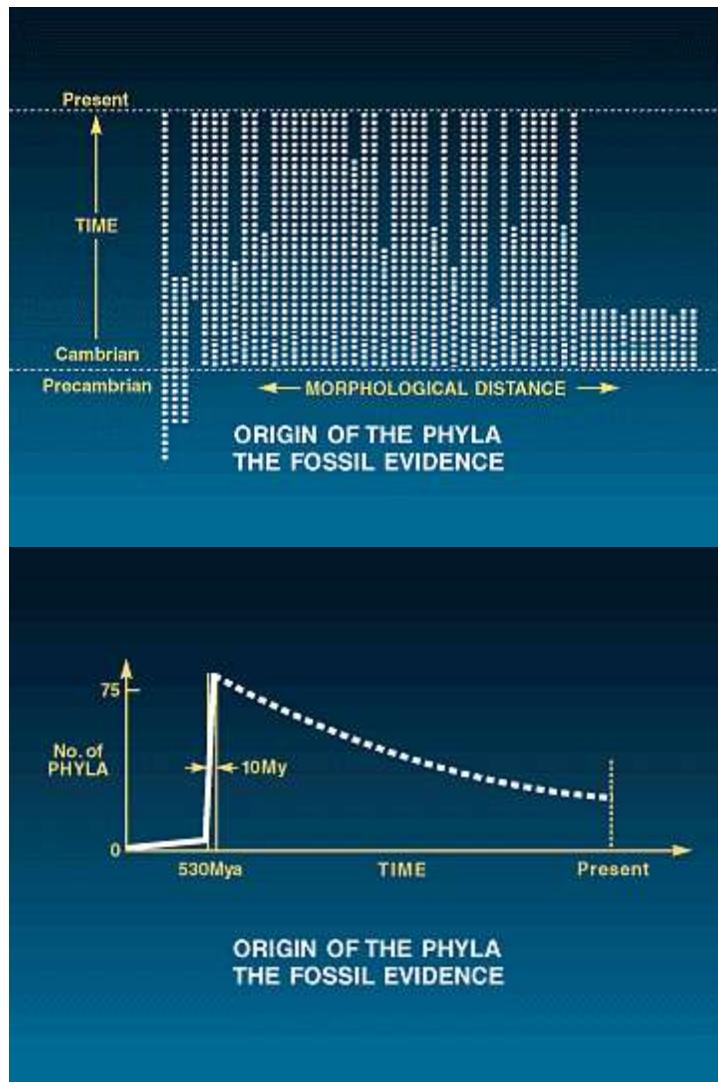
For example, Harvard professor Stephen J. Gould is famous for declaring that transition fossils are lacking, so evolution must have occurred in rapid spurts (by mysterious genetic mechanisms) separated by long periods of stasis. He called this concept "punctuated equilibrium." This was his attempt to cope with the absence of transitions above the level of created kinds:

*The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils.* (Gould)

Within scientific circles Gould drove home the point that transition fossils are lacking (as demonstrated in the Patterson quote above). Yet in speeches to the public in the last few years he

has directly contradicted himself, boldly claiming that transition fossils are one of the three best arguments for evolution! (Blievernicht) His prize example? Whale evolution. Yet scholars such as Ashby Camp and Dr. Duane Gish have documented that the "transition fossils" Gould mentions in his whale evolution model are recognized to be specialized side branches, unique creatures distinct from whales and one another. (Gish, Camp) Nor do they appear in the proper order in the geologic strata. Evolutionary lineages do not flow from the fossil evidence, rather Darwinian beliefs must be imposed on (selectively cited) fossil evidence, with many assumptions, to "see" a Darwinian transformation. Gould's *prize example* involved fudging to create "transition forms," which begs the question – **why are the trunk and main branches of the evolutionary tree perpetually missing from the fossil record?** The best answer is that they never existed.





Evolutionism teaches the appearance of life from non-life, followed by patterns of innovation and diversification from a single-celled ancestor to the great diversity of life we see around us today. Evolutionary predictions are shown in the top two graphics. The actual physical evidence of the fossil record is shown in the bottom two. The prediction is falsified, even when interpreted according to uniformitarian (old earth) belief.

*Described recently as "the most important evolutionary event during the entire history of the Metazoa," the Cambrian explosion established virtually all the major animal body forms -- Bauplane or phyla -- that would exist thereafter, including many that were 'weeded out' and became extinct. Compared with the 30 or so extant phyla, some people estimate that the Cambrian explosion may have generated as many as 100. The evolutionary innovation of the Precambrian/Cambrian boundary had clearly been extremely broad: "unprecedented and unsurpassed," as James Valentine of the University of California, Santa Barbara, recently put it. (Lewin)*

*The gaps in the fossil record are real, however. The absence of a record of any important branching is quite phenomenal. Species are usually static, or nearly so, for long periods, species seldom and genera never show evolution into new species or genera but replacement of one by another, and change is more or less abrupt.* (Wesson)

In summary, the fossil record contradicts Darwinism and supports the biblical teaching that God created all life in their distinct kinds, even when the fossil record is interpreted improperly from a uniformitarian perspective.

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## Sources & Further Study

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