

# The Latest " "Transition to the Land" " Tale

A report of a fossil discovery published in *Science* magazine has once again revealed the way in which the media constitute a broad and one-sided environment for Darwinism to thrive in. A small bone fragment extracted from the ground was the focus of interest for those who elect to believe the myth that the hundreds of millions of living species that constitute the present biodiversity on Earth all evolved from a common ancestor. Darwinist news agencies such as the BBC, CNN and MSNBC joined forces with Darwinist publications such as *Scientific American*, *National Geographic* and *New Scientist* to portray a bone fragment brought out of the ground in the state of Pennsylvania in the USA as evidence that fish moved to the land by turning into four-legged animals.

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In their article titled "The Early Evolution of the Tetrapod Humerus,"<sup>1</sup> carried in the 2 April 2004 edition of *Science* magazine, Neil H. Shubin and a team from the University of Chicago claimed that a humerus, shown in the picture to the side, that had survived from the Devonian period represented a stage in the so-called transition of the fish fin to the foot. They based this claim on the way the bone appeared to support a much larger muscle tissue. The researchers made a number of assumptions based on this feature, and displayed the following train of thought:

1. This bone might have a larger muscle tissue compared to bones from the same period,
2. These muscles helped the animal to propel itself along the ground, in a movement rather resembling a press-up,
3. A fish making movements of this kind, in the alleged transition to the land, might have been the earliest fish to allegedly grow feet.

In another article in the same edition of the magazine the evolutionist Jennifer A. Clack evaluates Shubin's findings and supports these scenarios, saying that the conclusions drawn by Shubin show that even a few, widely dispersed findings can be used in drawing inference about the nature and sequence of changes that must have occurred during the evolution of tetrapods' movements on land.<sup>2</sup>

Clack was right. Shubin can be regarded as having managed to draw inference from a few, widely dispersed bone fragments. Yet were these inferences produced as a natural and logical conclusion drawn from the available data, or else were they adapted to the theory in the light of evolutionists' preconceptions?

The best answer to this question comes from history, from the historical course of events regarding the coelacanth, which evolutionists once depicted as evidence of the alleged transition from the sea to the land.

## The Coelacanth Affair and the Error of Drawing Biological Conclusions from Skeletal Remains

The coelacanth is a large fish, approximately 1.5 metres (5 feet) long, whose body is covered in large, armour-like scales. It belongs to the bony fish (Osteichythes) class, and its fossil remains are first encountered in strata from the Devonian period (408-360 million years). Until 1938 many evolutionist zoologists assumed that the creature used the two paired fins on its body to walk along the sea bed and that the coelacanth was a transitional form between the sea and land creatures. As evidence for their claims, evolutionists cited the bony structures in the fins of the existing coelacanth fossils. A development in 1938, however, totally demolished this transitional form claim. A living coelacanth was caught in the open sea off the South African coast! Live studies of this fish, believed to have disappeared 70 million years before, showed that coelacanths had undergone **no changes at all for 400 million years**. Furthermore, a great many more coelacanths were caught in the years after 1938.

Evolutionists' dreams regarding the coelacanth, which turned to dust in 1938, were no different to the tale being told in the article in *Science* magazine. The coelacanth's bony fins were equated by evolutionists with the appendages serving the purpose of walking in tetrapods (vertebrates with four legs). However, researchers studying the creature in its natural habitat saw that the **flexible fins had no function similar to legs in four-legged land vertebrates**. They actually enabled the animal to swim in all directions, including upside-down and backwards.

The coelacanth went down in the history of *Science* as documentary proof of evolutionists' vivid imaginations.

One major factor in evolutionists' errors with regard to the coelacanth was the speculation engaged in with regard to the fish's biology solely from looking at the bones. The molecular biologist Michael Denton has revealed the erroneous nature of the evolutionists' perspective vis-à-vis the coelacanth by saying:

If the case of the coelacanth illustrates anything, it shows **how difficult it is to draw conclusions about the overall biology of organisms from their skeletal remains alone**. Because soft biology of extinct groups can never be known with any certainty then **obviously the status of even the most convincing intermediates is bound to be insecure**. 3(*our emphasis*)

Both the error regarding the coelacanth and these words of Denton's which indicate its source show how the interpretations made by Shubin and his team need to be regarded as speculative and uncertain. This is how reasonable people with common sense who are capable of learning from history should behave, and they should regard Shubin's interpretations based on a tiny bone fragment as consisting of groundless assumptions.

### **Fossils and the Transition Hysteria in the Media**

As we stated at the beginning of this article, this bone finding came in for considerable interest from Darwinist media circles and was widely broadcast. However, the fossil record shows that this interest consisted of **an unnecessary and artificial wave of hysteria**. That is because the fact that the fossils required by the theory of evolution's claims of transition are completely absent from geological strata has been known ever since Darwin's time and is openly admitted by palaeontologists.

For example, the well-known evolutionist palaeontologist Steven M. Stanley has said:

The known **fossil record** fails to document a single example of phyletic evolution accomplishing a major morphologic transition and hence **offers no evidence that the gradualistic model can be valid**. 4 (*our emphasis*)

Another evolutionist palaeontologist, Mark Czarnecki, uses similar language to describe the position:

**A major problem in proving the theory has been the fossil record...** This record has never revealed traces of Darwin's hypothetical intermediate variants—instead species appear and disappear abruptly, and this anomaly has fuelled the creationist argument that each species was created by God. 5 (*our emphasis*)

These words from Stanley and Czarnecki clearly reveal that there is no fossil record to verify Darwinism. Although the absence of transitional fossils from the record is perfectly well known, the way that the claims about transition in the context of this new finding were so widely broadcast in the media is an indication that evolution is being sought to be kept alive as a philosophy. This wave of hysteria documents the way in which the theory of evolution is blindly supported although everyone is aware of the lethal blow that transitional fossils, or the absence thereof, deal to it.

### **A Call to Common Sense**

It is clear that the finding reported in *Science* magazine constitutes no evidence for the theory of evolution. The fact that such a slender discovery is portrayed as important evidence of evolution by the Darwinist media reveals an inconsistency that damages the media principle of objectivity and that stems solely from philosophical prejudice. Indeed, the history of relations between the press and Darwinist scientists is full of contradictions of this kind.

It is most interesting that it is as if these words by the entomologist WR Thompson in 1968 were describing this latest "transition hysteria:"

As we know, there is a great divergence of opinion among biologists, not only about the causes of evolution but even about the actual process. This divergence exists **because the evidence is unsatisfactory and does not permit any certain conclusion**. It is therefore right and proper to draw the attention of the non-scientific public to the disagreements about evolution.

But some recent remarks of evolutionists show that they think this unreasonable. This situation, where scientific men rally to the defence of a doctrine they are unable to define scientifically, much less demonstrate with scientific rigour, attempting to maintain its credit with the public by the suppression of criticism and the elimination of difficulties, **is abnormal and undesirable in Science**. 6 (*our emphasis*)

We fully agree with Thompson's words, and invite both members of the media and scientists to "draw the attention of the public to the disagreements about evolution" with regard to scientific developments concerning Darwinism. Nothing else is compatible with *Science*.

### **Conclusion:**

The evolutionist interpretations of the fossil announced in *Science* magazine consist solely of assumptions based on preconceptions. Shubin and his colleagues are inventing scenarios in the light of the Darwinism they have taken on board as a dogma from the very outset. The way that these scenarios receive unilateral support in the Darwinist media stems from an attempt to keep the materialist world view alive. We advise *Science* magazine to cease providing blind support for Darwinism.

Note: This article is a response also to the following news reports about the fossil concerned:

- "Fossil arm holds evolutionary secrets," CNN.com, 2 April 2004
- "Fossil Illuminates Evolution of Limbs from Fins," *Scientific American*, 2 April 2004
- "Fossil of the First Creature to Crawl on to Land," NTVMSNBC.COM, 2 April 2004

1. Neil H. Shubin et. al., "The Early Evolution of the Tetrapod Humerus," *Science*, vol. 304, issue 667, 2 April 2004, pp. 90-93
2. Jennifer A. Clack, "From Fins to Fingers," *Science*, vol. 304, no. 5667, 2 April 2004, pp. 57-58
3. Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, London: Burnett Books, 1985, pp. 178-180
4. Steven M. Stanley, *Macroevolution: Pattern and Process*, San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1979, p. 39
5. Mark Czarnecki, "The Revival of the Creationist Crusade," *MacLean's*, 19 January 1981, p. 56
6. WR Thompson, "Introduction," in Darwin C.R., *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, [1872], London: Everyman's Library, J.M. Dent & Sons, 6th Edition, 1967, reprint, p. xxii

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