

MIRACULOUS DESIGN FEATURES IN WOODPECKERS†

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The woodpecker has a number of specially designed features which distinguish it from other birds, and permits it efficiently to function as a living "jackhammer".

One of the most amazing features is a tongue that extends three to five times the normal length to extract worms and insects from hollow trees. One might think that the woodpecker would need to have a tongue rooted in the tail to perform this neat trick; but in reality, the tongue originates in the right nostril. It exits the right nostril, splits into two segments, wraps around the skull beneath the skin passing on either side of the neck bones, joins together and comes up through the lower mandible (jaw). It is composed of an elastic tissue and the root portion is stiffened by five tiny bones called the hyoid apparatus.

These bones can be seen clearly in the cover illustration which is an untouched picture of a flicker woodpecker's skull found in this exact condition in the woods by Mrs. Clair Gotshall in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. Insects had apparently picked the bones clean of all flesh.

As can be seen, two of the hyoid bones exit the right nostril and are connected to the next two bones by miniature ball joints. A third ball joint appears at the fork as it passes through the jaw where the fifth bone is joined which stiffens the outer portion of the tongue.

Charles Darwin's Omission

Charles Darwin wrote that the thought of how anything as complex as the eyeball could have evolved turned him cold. Well, the woodpecker's tongue must have literally frozen him up completely; for he wrote an entire page in *The Origin of Species* about the marvelous adaptations of the 179 species of woodpeckers, but he didn't even discuss the most marvelous feature of all, the origin of the tongue in the right nostril. Neither the *Encyclopedia Britannica* nor *Americana* contains any mention of it either, although the 1972 edition of the *World Book Encyclopedia* contains a sketch of the complete tongue with hyoid.

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†An account similar to this by the same author appeared in the *Bible - Science Newsletter*, Vol. 13, No. 10, October, 1975, p. 4.

Other special features are: A tough beak that can drive through hard wood which would bend a nail; strong neck muscles that deliver jackhammer blows to the head and beak; a thick skull that withstands continuous shocks that would kill or give a bad headache to other birds; a glue "factory" in the tongue which makes the surface sticky; stiff tail feathers with sharp spines which brace the bird for hammering; and viselike toes with two in front and two in back, rather than three and one like other birds. All these features are integrated into a perfect living, flying jackhammer.

Admitted Insurmountable Problems

Think of the insurmountable problems this bird poses for evolutionists. They would need to start their evolutionary speculations with a normal bird like a robin. Think how many millions of robins would need to have bashed their brains out trying to play jackhammer before, not just one, but a pair of them accidentally and gradually mutated a tongue like that. Even if two were lucky enough to come up with the right tongue, it would have been of no adaptive advantage without the other features.

This woodpecker's skull has been more effective in convincing scientists of the inadequacies of the evolution "theory" than perhaps any book in the author's library. Other birds have hyoid bones, also, but it would seem obvious that some sort of miracle would be needed to get them rooted in the right nostril.

One prominent evolutionist on the editorial staff of a prestigious scientific magazine confided to the author after examining the skull, "There are certain anatomical features which just cannot be explained by gradual mutations over millions of years. Just between you and me, I have to get God into the act too sometimes."

Another scientist observed, while examining the skull under a microscope, "It is very easy to tell the difference between man-made and God-made objects. The more you magnify man-made objects, the cruder they look but the more you magnify God-made objects the more precise and intricate they appear."

A Note

For more about birds' tongues, see Wallace, George J., and Maken, Harold D. 1975. An introduction to ornithology. Third Edition. Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, pp. 119 and 120.

Editor's Note: I understand that Mr. Sunderland published a letter to the editor in the local newspaper in which he offered a reward of \$25.00 to anyone who could give a reasonable explanation of how the woodpecker's tongue could have evolved. Needless to say, Mr. Sunderland still has his \$25.00.

SPECIAL REPRINT AVAILABLE

The primary purpose of the Creation Research Society is to carry out, or to encourage, Creationist research in the natural sciences, and to publish the results of such research. In an article in the June, 1975 issue of the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, Dr. Duane T. Gish published a summary report of Creationist research in the last decade.

His report was organized under these headings: Geology, General Geological Reports, Genetics, Natural Selection, General Biology, Taxonomy, Thermodynamics, and A Research Challenge.

So that members of the Creation Research Society and other interested persons might distribute this summary of a decade of Creationist research a special reprint of the Gish article has been made available. The 16-page reprint is priced at 75 cents per copy, with price reduced to 50 cents each for orders of 100 copies. Orders for the reprint may be placed through the College Bookstore of Concordia College, Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Postage will be paid by the bookstore.