

The Error of "Evolutionary Change in Galapagos Finches"

New Scientist magazine carried an article headed "Evolution in action by Darwin's finches" in its 22 July, 2006, issue. The article concerned various observations made during the drought that affected the Galapagos Islands in 2003 and 2004 by the researchers Peter and Rosemary Grant, known for their studies of the island's finches. The drought-related reduction in the seeds that represent the finches' food resulted in changes in the size of the beaks of the finch species *Geospiza fortis* and *Geospiza magnirostris*.

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G. magnirostris, which has a larger and heavier beak, assumed a more advantageous position compared to *G. fortis* since it was more successful at breaking the shells of large and hard seeds left over during the drought. *G. fortis*, on the other hand, was forced to eat smaller seeds during this period. Since these seeds were better suited to a more agile and smaller beak, *G. fortis* individuals with their small beaks obtained a more advantageous position compared to the others and there was a rise in their population levels. Rather than enter into competition with *G. magnirostris* over large and hard-shelled seeds, *G. fortis* turned towards seeds with other characteristics, and the population began to be increasingly made up of small-beaked individuals.

The following misleading comment on this state of affairs appeared in *New Scientist*:

This is the first time that an evolutionary change to evade competition has been observed from start to finish.

However, the claim that the observation in question is an "evolutionary change" is absolutely and scientifically invalid. The observed reduction in the beak size of finches is not based on the acquisition of any new genetic information in the finches' DNA. To put it another way, there is no question of any biological novelty here. The situation is all to do with external factor-related fluctuations in features that already existed in the finch population. No new information was bestowed on the finch population, and no life form turned into another. There is no question of any acquisition of new genetic information; in other words, there is no question of evolution.

G. fortis individuals turn to eating smaller seeds rather than compete with *G. magnirostris* for thick-shelled seeds. Since having a small beak emerged as an advantage during this process, those *G. fortis* individuals whose beaks were not sufficiently small experienced more difficulty in finding food, and their numbers declined accordingly. As a result, there was a proportional increase in the number of individuals with small beaks in the *G. fortis* population.

Note that this process concerns only the elimination of already existing characteristics (in this case, beak size). Even if drought is regarded as a factor determining beak dimensions, it cannot explain how finches or a structure such as the beak appeared in the first place.

In addition, this factor did not cause the organisms to acquire any new genetic information.

This is not the kind of biologic change hypothesized by Darwin's theory, because there is no question here of organisms gradually acquiring new characteristics and turning into other species. Such a result has never been obtained, not in this example and not in any of the countless experiments and observations conducted by evolutionary biologists. All scientific experiments and observations have revealed that biological change is limited to variations within a species and that there are genetic obstacles that separate species from one another.

For these reasons, *New Scientist's* interpretation of "evolutionary change" is erroneous. We hope that the magazine's management will see that fluctuations observed in the variations within a population

constitute no evidence for Darwinism, and advise them to put an end to such groundless Darwinist propaganda.

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