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How on Earth Could They Do That?

(Animal Distribution after the Flood)

By Calvin Smith

With my Mom having been born in Newfoundland (Canada), I often visited and spent long periods of time there growing up. And anyone having met a Newfoundlander has undoubtedly experienced the charming, if sometimes bewildering, accent many of them have. Very often, it is accompanied by many rapid-fire and often humorous colloquialisms that burst forth when conversing with a native of “the Rock” (as the island is often fondly called by “Newfies”).

The first of my favorite sayings (often delivered while being cheered up after something hadn’t quite gone the way I’d wanted it to) was “Well, it’s better dan a kick in de head wid a frozen boot!” (How could anyone argue with that logic?) The second, usually heard when asking directions from an islander, was the quick prelude often given before their guidelines were offered. “Oh der buddy, you can’t get der from here!”

You Can’t Get There from Here!

On a similar but more serious note, when Bible critics attempt to discredit the trustworthiness of the Bible, they often mock the historical account of Noah’s ark and the great deluge, as well as the accompanying situations that must have inevitably occurred because of it, as being preposterous. And one of those situations is the fact that as animals left the ark after the flood was over, they would

have needed to travel all over the world, which would be practically impossible today.

Are we biblical creationists really saying that kangaroos on the mountains of Ararat somehow hopped all the way to Canberra in Australia? Are we somehow inferring that the koalas also accompanied them or that other endemic species such as the ring-tailed lemurs leapt their way to Madagascar? Did they climb over hill and dale, swim the seven seas, and navigate nature to places only they could be nurtured? The skeptic, like my Newfie neighbors, would claim they couldn’t get there from here.

Where There’s a “Will” There’s a Way

We know God’s Word is true, and it is His testament to mankind. And the book of Genesis reveals the instructions God gave Noah regarding exiting the ark after the floodwaters subsided and dried from off from the face of the ground after the ark had landed.

God asked Noah to get his family and every living creature out of the ark, “birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth” (Genesis 8:17b). And “Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, every thing that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.” (Genesis 8:19)

After that, there aren’t many details on how those animals migrated. However, the biblical and other historical evidence we have, along with much scientific research that’s been done (by both secular and biblical creationists), point to two main mechanisms for animal dispersion after the ark landed: (1) Post-flood (Noah’s global) environmental conditions; and (2) Human behavior.

Connecting the Dots

First of all, while it's true that major bodies of water separate continents from one another today, even secular scientists agree that at one time the oceans were much lower in the past during the height of the ice age (some evolutionists believe in many "ice ages," while creationists typically believe in one that was triggered after the flood). Because of the extensiveness of the glacial ice sheets on the earth at that time, there must have been a massive amount of water removed from earth's oceans through precipitation to provide for it, which would have lowered sea levels dramatically.

A simple Google image search with a mix of keywords like "extent of the ice age," "world map," and "ocean levels," will reveal several depictions of the continents of the world as it is now, with an additional extended outline (beyond where those continents are today) that depict how far they believe the continents would extend above water due to the lowered sea level at the time of the ice age.

So, the animals that populated the earth far away from the mountainous region of Ararat where Noah's ark landed some 4,500 years ago would have eventually been able to travel across land-bridges for the most part. But how exactly they moved through continents or why certain wild animals live in specific regions of the earth remains a puzzling mystery.

Faster Than a Speeding . . . Toad?

Even considering the truth that the continents were connected at some time in the past, skeptics often mock the idea of creatures traveling such vast distances. However, we are talking hundreds of years of time and many generations of creatures, representing millions of offspring, doing the trek incrementally, not all at once during a brief sprint. And surprisingly to many, even small, clumsier (compared to a gazelle, for example) animals are quite capable of spreading on their own and covering incredibly long distances.

When cane toads (not the spryest of God's creatures) were introduced by humans into Australia to tackle pests, it only took ten years for their population to spread a distance of 2,000 km! These toads have populated great regions of the continent, from an initial population of 102 to an estimated 200 million today.¹ Unfortunately, they've become pests themselves as the toads are poisonous to most Australian carnivorous wildlife that try to eat them. Alarmingly to

many Aussies, their current rate of spread is reportedly from 5 to 50 km per year. But a toad has got to do what a toad has to do, and as a famous green Muppet once said, "Not bad for an amphibian!"

What needs to be considered is that after the flood there would have been no problem for successive population waves of animals moving into "empty" ecological niches in all directions. And modern recolonization studies can also attest to how rapidly animals can migrate to even geographically isolated locations or places recently devastated by recent catastrophes (like Surtsey Island off the coast of Iceland or the island of Krakatoa in the tropical Pacific). Look at how Britannica.com describes the rapidity of animal colonization at both locations in just a short period.

Six months after the eruption of a volcano on the island of Surtsey off the coast of Iceland in 1963, the island had been colonized by a few bacteria, molds, insects, and birds. Within about a year of the eruption of a volcano on the island of Krakatoa in the tropical Pacific in 1883, a few grass species, insects, and vertebrates had taken hold. On both Surtsey and Krakatoa, only a few decades had elapsed before hundreds of species reached the islands. Not all species are able to take hold and become permanently established, but eventually the island communities stabilize into a dynamic equilibrium.²

Catching a Lift

It should be noted that by any geological standard, Surtsey is a brand-new land feature on our planet. *National Geographic* described it this way:

On November 14, 1963, an Icelandic fisherman noticed a plume of smoke rising from the open water. Within a day, Surtsey, a new volcanic island, had formed off the southern coast of Iceland. By 1965, plant life had colonized the relatively flat southern portion of the island, which is also visited by migratory birds and seals. Fifty-two plant species have been recorded and the number rises each year.³

The fact is that many creatures have amazing abilities that allow them to travel around the world. Ballooning spiders for example can sense earth's electromagnetic field and use their webs to "fly" using electrostatic propulsion. Spiders have been found two-and-a-half miles up in the air and 1,000 miles out to sea, so they can relocate to far distant lands easily (they are like the "super heroes" of the bug world). But fantastic powers aren't needed to explain animal dispersion,

as they often use much less sophisticated methods of travel. Some of them might simply have been situational, like getting stranded on debris during a storm or because of an accident.

We find land tortoises in islands in the Pacific Ocean and also thousands of miles away in the Indian Ocean, but nowhere else in between. These are called split ranges, and the after-effects of a global flood render important clues to explain this. Massive floating vegetation mats made of trees and other plants ripped up during the global flood would have been plentiful for years after the floodwaters subsided. These could have served as rafts to transport animals in circular patterns around the world's oceans before the animals ever landed on a continent or an island. So, land tortoises might have reached islands that are far apart this way.

These log mats aren't that uncommon after a major catastrophe, and an example of massive amounts of floating logs and wood debris can be seen to this day on Spirit Lake near Mount St. Helens, in Washington (USA), brought about by the devastating volcanic eruption of 1980. Forty years later, hundreds of thousands of logs from Douglas fir trees are still floating on the lake. Mats of bigger proportions, snarled and entwined together with other debris, could have floated a lot longer on the water after Noah's flood, allowing the transportation of animals on them.

Traveling Buddies

One likelihood is that people traveled with animals as they spread throughout the world. Modern examples include the introduction of goats, sheep, rabbits, and cows in Australia by settlers from Europe in the 1800s. Previous to that, European migrants traveled with domestic animals like chickens, pigs, and cattle to North America and inadvertently also brought pests like European species of rats with them.

What About Specific Creatures like the Platypus?

Regardless of the travel opportunities afforded to the majority of creatures that disembarked from Noah's great zoo, skeptics still try to marginalize the account by pointing to creatures like the platypus as an example of a creature that is far too small and fragile to have taken the trip of thousands of miles through the merciless deserts between northern Australia and Tasmania in the south.

Even ignoring a more circuitous route on vegetation mats as I mentioned, platypus could have easily migrated through Australia when it was lush and green, as there is evidence accepted by everyone who's examined the facts that Australia's inland once had thriving rainforests that have since dried up. And this fits well with a "saturated" world drying out for a long time after the flood and subsequent climate changes since then.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race

For most people, it should be obvious that no individual porcupine, pig, penguin, or platypus would have had to make the entire trip to their current locations around the world. For example, rabbits, not native to the Australian mainland before being introduced in 1859, spread across it completely in only a few short decades! If they could do this in less than a person's lifetime, it's evident that one of them need not have taken a giant leap. Rather, every individual likely took a small step for "rabbit kind's" occupation of Australia, and each generation simply moved a little distance further than its parents had. It's true that no one animal could ever "get there from here," but given hundreds of years of time, and millions of individual offspring, it is more than reasonable to believe they did it all together.

The explanation of the evidence makes better sense if a scientist's starting point is the historical, biblical account, and they can then use the advances we have in science to answer questions pertaining to how animal distribution took place after the flood. However, regardless of any particular challenges and the need for more research into specific examples, the key to understanding animal migration after the flood is simply the concept of inch by inch, little by little, and slowly but surely.

Footnotes

1. "10 Facts about cane toads," September 23, 2019, <https://www.wwf.org.au/news/blogs/10-facts-about-cane-toads#gs.u2qjjk>.
2. "Community equilibrium and species diversity," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/science/community-ecology/Community-equilibrium-and-species-diversity>.
3. "Surtsey, Island Born of Fire," *National Geographic* 127, no. 5 (1965):712–726.

FROM: <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/calvin-smith/2021/03/01/how-on-earth-could-they-do-that/>

Good Thoughts...

“Don’t feel sorry for, or fear for your kids because the world they are going to grow up in is not what it used to be. God created them and called them for the exact moment in time that they’re in. Their life wasn’t a coincidence or an accident.

Raise them up to know the power they walk in as children of God. Train them up in the authority of His Word. Teach them to walk in faith knowing that God is in control. Empower them to know they can change the world.

Don’t teach them to be fearful and disheartened by the state of the world but hopeful that they can do something about it. Every person in all of history has been placed in the time that they were in because of God’s sovereign plan.

He knew Daniel could handle the lions den. He knew David could handle Goliath. He knew Esther could handle Haman. He knew Peter could handle persecution. He knows that your child can handle whatever challenge they face in their life. He created them specifically for it!

Don’t be scared for your children, but be honored that God chose YOU to parent the generation that is facing the biggest challenges of our lifetime. Rise up to the challenge.

Raise Daniels, Davids, Esthers and Peters! God isn’t scratching His head wondering what He’s going to do with this mess of a world. He has an army He’s raising up to drive back the darkness and make Him known all over the earth. Don’t let your fear steal the greatness God placed in them. I know it’s hard to imagine them as anything besides our sweet little babies, and we just want to protect them from anything that could ever be hard on them, but they were born for such a time as this.”

Just some thoughts from a dad who is rocking his sleeping baby and thinking about what a crazy day it has been in our country.

- Alex Cravens

FUNNIES

It was the first day of school. The teacher pointed to the first row and asked each student to identify himself. The first boy said, “My name is Benjy.”

The teacher said, “You should use your formal name in class. Your name is Benjamin.” She pointed to the next boy and said, “What is your name?”

The second boy said, “Davyamin!”

“The Farmer’s Almanac avoids mentioning politics,” explained a spokesman for the publication. “The last time we mentioned politics was in 1924. At that time we said Congress talked too much and spent too much. We haven’t found it necessary to make an utterance since.”

The nurse picked up the phone to hear that someone wanted to know about Mr. Yoder’s condition. The nurse answered, “Mr. Yoder is doing fine. He’ll be going home in two days. Who shall I say called?” The voice at the other end of the line said, “This is Mr. Yoder. The doctor won’t tell me a thing.”

A good old country boy came running into the restaurant and said to his buddy, “Al, they stole your pickup truck.” Al jumped up, saying, “Who?” The good old country boy said, “I didn’t see his face, but I got the license number!”

An antique collector passing through a small village stopped to watch an old man chopping wood with an ancient ax. “That’s a mighty old ax you have there,” he remarked. “Yup,” said the villager, “It once belonged to George Washington.” “Not really!” gasped the collector. “It has certainly stood up well.” “Of course,” admitted the old man, “It’s had three new handles and two new heads.”