

A Seal of Approval – 2

The term *adaptation*, as it is used in biology, refers to **a modification** within a species, e.g. of **an organ**, by which that species is **enabled** to function **most efficiently** in its environment. Last time we noted how the presence of the seal's thick layer of blubber helps in three different ways.

- That of buoyancy is critical in an animal which spends most of its life in the sea or other waters. Those who advocate the theory of evolution say that each modification in life-forms has occurred without the conscious direction of thought or mind. It was the result of a happy, extended series of accidents, they say, of chance occurrences in which planning had no part.

The form of **the limbs** as **webbed flippers** best serves the purpose for use in swimming. Leaving out special requirements for the muscles and tendons, there are **three major adaptations** of the limbs. The **limbs are shortened** and the **feet are lengthened**. Beside being lengthened, the **individual digits** are also united for most of their length by a **fold of skin**.

- Marvellously, all four limbs of the seal are now in the same general form. If this was a **chance adaptation**, then one would expect a **single limb at a time** to change, and for a very great number of **generations**, each limb to be in **various stages** of the three modifications. There ought to be some **fossil evidence** of this.

Unlike other marine mammals like whales, dolphins, dugongs, manatees and the now extinct (circa 1770) sea cow, **seals are amphibious**. While they live mostly in the water, they do haul out occasionally to avoid predators, also to rest, molt and get warmed up. **Annually**, they leave the water to **give birth** and mate for next year's pups.

- The female seals of most species become **ready for mating shortly after birthing time**. Remarkably, the **embryo** does not immediately attach to the wall of the uterus, but remains in **suspended development** for a considerable time before proceeding normally. This delay in implantation **postpones birth** until the next annual beaching time arrives.

This arrangement in the females speaks clearly of foresight, planning and design, all manifestations of a rational mind. Yet we are asked to believe that this arrangement occurred by the mindless action of random occurrences, e.g., errors in the process of copying DNA.

- The long molecular chain of DNA contains the coded record of all the attributes of the individual, in this case the seal. This includes, not only the physical construction of the individual, but what is analogous to the software in a computer, which directs the operations within that body, e.g., the triggering of events in the functioning of the body.

Some may not consider it too much of a stretch to accept a chance occurrence of the thick layer of blubber. But when an animal is found to have **many adaptations**, all operating to enable its survival and prosperity, their sheer number **point strongly to design**. When we consider the **reproductive adaptation** in the seal, it becomes clear that the likelihood of accidental cause is far less than the operation of **design**, which is defined as **"a plan or scheme conceived in the mind."**

- First, the designer has an **objective**, in this case a carnivorous **aquatic mammal** that lives chiefly in **cold regions**. Next, **what abilities** does this animal need to cope in its planned environment? Then, **what special adaptations** are required in what parts and organs for the animal to be able to function? By the sheer **success** of this family of animals, it is **completely appropriate** to regard it as **well designed**. More next time, God willing.