

If Evolution Is True, Then Why Do I Have to Floss?

By Alfred B. Davis
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I hate to floss. I don't know about you, but I hate to floss. Now, don't get me wrong. I understand that flossing is an important part of good dental hygiene. It helps keep you from developing cavities and gum disease, as well as preventing the loss of teeth. Nevertheless, I just don't like doing it.



Thinking about the benefits of flossing, though, brings up an interesting question about evolution. If evolution is driven by changes in morphology and behavior that confer survival benefits, why don't we see any evidence of toothed animals that have some sort of innate flossing mechanism? After all, we do know of several mutually beneficial symbiotic relationships whereby one animal essentially "flosses" the teeth of another. For instance, the bluestreak cleaner wrasse and skunk cleaner shrimp are frequently found entering and cleaning the mouths of a variety of predatory fish, such as eels, groupers, and sharks, as well as sea turtles. A scuba diver even once videoed himself lying motionless by a reef with his mouth open while a cleaner shrimp entered and began cleaning his teeth. Another example is the Egyptian plover, noted as far back as the 5th Century BC by the Greek historian, Herodotus, as cleaning the mouths of the Nile crocodiles. Even American alligators have been observed with their mouths wide open as cormorants enter and clean in and around their teeth.

Now, there are obvious benefits to both the cleaners and their hosts. The cleaners gain a source of food by gleaning food particles in and around the mouths of their hosts. The hosts gain the advantage of a cleaner mouth, reducing the risk of inflammation and infection, leading to better health and longer lives. Evolutionists cite these benefits as improving the ability of both host and cleaners to be more successful and therefore more likely to pass on their genes and behaviors to future generations, thus gradually evolving their relationship from predator-prey to host-cleaner. But, if we are going to invoke minute, incremental evolutionary processes occurring slowly over millions of years to explain why an alligator or crocodile willingly holds open its mouth while allowing a tasty bird to walk in and out without biting down to explain the origin of the mutually beneficial host-cleaner relationship, then why don't we see evolution develop some sort of innate flossing mechanism?

To understand my question, you must understand the evolutionary explanation for the origin of scales, hair, feathers, and teeth. Evolutionists believe that scales evolved first in a common ancestor. Then, through a series of minute, incremental, favorable, and advantageous mutations and adaptations occurring over millions of generations those early scales eventually differentiated into the scales, hair, feathers, and teeth that we find on animals today. Part of the reason for this belief is because all four follow a common embryonic development from placodes, which are essentially patches of thickened skin in embryos formed by specialized columnar cells.

For example, Paul T. Sharpe, writing in *Current Biology* (Paul T. Sharpe, Fish scale development: Hair today, teeth and scales yesterday?, *Current Biology*, Volume 11, Issue 18, 2001, Pages R751-R752, <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0960-9822\(01\)00438-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0960-9822(01)00438-9)>.

[<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0960982201004389>]) wrote:

At first glance, hair, teeth and scales appear to have little in common aside from all being vertebrate appendages. Hair and fish scales are distributed over the body surface in an orderly pattern, but are morphologically, and evolutionary different. Teeth and fish scales are morphologically different too, but both are elements of the dermal skeleton and they are supposed to be derived from a common ancestor...

Basic structure and possible evolutionary relationship between vertebrate ectodermal/dermal appendages. Hair follicles are ectodermally derived and are believed to have evolved from reptile scales. Teeth and teleost scales are dermally derived and may have evolved from a common ancestor, the dermal armour of ancient fishes...

Although they are both skin appendages, hair and scales are not homologous organs. Hair, and also feathers, are ectodermal structures containing keratin that probably evolved from keratinised epidermal scales in a common ancestor of mammals and reptiles. Fish scales on the other hand do not contain keratin. They are mineralised dermal elements that possibly contain dentine- and enamel-derived proteins...

The evolutionary link between fish scales and teeth is more substantial. Scales in teleost fish evolved from the dermal armour covering the body of ancient vertebrates. The structural and developmental similarities of fish dermal armour and mammalian teeth has led to the suggestion that teeth evolved by internalisation of dentin-containing dermal armour 'odontodes' into the oral cavity.

Further, in fact, in an article in ScienceDaily (Université de Genève. "Hairs, feathers and scales have a lot in common." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 24 June 2016. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160624154658.htm>), Michel Milinkovitch is quoted saying:

Our study not only provides new molecular data that complement the work of the American team but also reveals key microanatomical facts ... Indeed, we have identified in reptiles new molecular signatures that are identical to those observed during the development of hairs and feathers, as well as the presence of the same anatomical placode as in mammals and birds. This indicates that the three types of skin appendages are homologous: the reptilian scales, the avian feathers and the mammalian hairs, despite their very different final shapes, evolved from the scales of their reptilian common ancestor.

Now, armed with a rudimentary understanding of how evolutionists believe that scales, hair, feathers, and teeth evolved from a common structure, let's get back to my original question: If evolution is true, then why do I have to floss?

Here is what I am getting at. According to evolutionists, evolution has produced complex, mutually beneficial symbiotic relationships that allow prey animals, like shrimp, wrasse, plovers, and cormorants, to willingly enter into the mouths of predators, such as eels, groupers, sharks, sea turtles, crocodiles, and alligators. If evolution could produce the physiological and behavioral modifications and adaptations necessary to turn the predator-prey relationship into a mutually beneficial cleaner-host relationship, then why did it not produce a toothed animal with some sort of hair or feather in between the teeth or along the gum line that sweeps or flosses the teeth? After all,

if hair and feathers develop from placodes as do teeth, then it seems reasonable to believe, given the millions of years of evolution that have supposedly occurred, that at least one organism should have developed some sort of hair or feather between its teeth or along its gum line with the ability to sweep across and between the teeth, thus providing the same sort of oral health benefits as cleaners provide to their hosts. In fact, considering that morphological changes and adaptations resulting in self-flossing in a single organism should be more likely to result from changes and mutations in DNA than behavioral changes in multiple organisms, self-flossing would seem to be a more likely evolutionary result than cleaner-host relationships. However, we do not see evidence of that in nature.

So, since we see no evidence of self-flossing, which should be a lesser evolutionary hurdle than host-cleaner relationships, let's consider another explanation: God. The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter one that God created the earth and all the life forms in it, during a six-day period. When you look at the sequence of the creation of animals, it is apparent that scales, hair, feathers, and teeth all appear for the first time on Day Five:

²⁰And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life [scales, teeth], and fowl [feathers, teeth] that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. ²¹And God created great whales [hair, teeth], and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. ²³And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. (Genesis 1:20-23)

We also find scales, hair, feathers, and teeth again appearing all at once on Day Six with the creation of land animals and man.

The order of appearance given in the Genesis account of creation simply does not correspond to what the evolutionists claim. Even those who believe in theistic evolution, the idea that God guided evolution to produce the various living things that we see today, can't make the evolutionary path from early scales to modern scales, hair, feathers, and teeth fit the Genesis account, no matter how hard they twist the Scriptures or how long they make the days!

Special creation, however, as recorded in Genesis, explains why we see complex cleaner-host relationships but not self-flossing in nature. These symbiotic relationships did not evolve over millions of years but are, rather, the result of physical characteristics and behaviors deliberately designed and created by God Himself. They are a testimony to the glory and the power of the Creator, not some ambiguous process:

²⁴O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. ²⁵So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. (Psalm 104:24-25)

Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. (Nehemiah 9:6)

Now, while none of this disproves evolution in and of itself, it does, however, cast doubt. Enough doubt for my professor at Colorado State University at the close of our senior level Forest Biology course to say, "There are only two explanations possible: evolution or special creation. I choose to believe evolution because I don't want special creation to be true." And when there is doubt, you need to weigh the evidence and consider arguments of both sides and decide which seems more likely to be true. Because, as my professor unwittingly pointed out, belief in evolution, like belief in special creation, is a matter of choice. As for me, I choose to believe in special creation. I choose to believe that cleaner-host relationships exist because God created them. I choose to believe that scales, hair, feathers, and teeth were created exactly how God designed them. And I choose to believe these things because I not only believe that special creation better explains the variety and complexity of life, but I also believe in the God of the Bible who is the Giver and Creator of life. And because I believe in the God of the Bible, I believe:

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (Revelation 4:11)

Besides, if evolution is true, then why do I have to floss?

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