BEAR VARIETY: PROOF OF AN INFINITE CREATOR

JEFF MILLER

SMOKEY THE BEAR, WINNIE THE POOH, PO FROM “KUNG FU PANDA,” BALOO FROM “THE JUNGLE BOOK,” the Berenstain Bears, Lots-o’-Huggin’ from “Toy Story 3,” Teddy Ruxpin, Little John from Disney’s “Robin Hood,” Yogi Bear and Boo-Boo, Fozzie Bear, the Coca-Cola Polar Bears, the Care Bears, Paddington…. Obviously, we love bears. So much so, that they are the last thing many kids see and touch before they fall asleep. So we feel confident that you will enjoy learning about God’s amazing bears in this issue of Discovery.

According to dictionaries, a bear is a large, strong mammal that has coarse, long, heavy fur, a small tail, relatively small limbs, lives in the colder areas of America and Europe/Asia, and can eat plants, insects, or meat. Eight distinct species of bears exist today (Polar, Brown, Sun, Sloth, American Black, Asiatic Black, Andean, and Giant Panda bears), and there are many others that have gone extinct over the centuries since the Flood (including the Cave Bear and the American Giant Short-Faced Bear).

The idea of a “species,” however, is a modern concept that would not have existed at the time of Moses when he, through inspiration, wrote the book of Genesis some 1,500 years ago. Instead of “species,” Moses used the term “kinds” when telling us what creatures God created in Genesis 1, and what creatures were brought onto the Ark in Genesis 6-9. “Kinds” is thought to be a broader term than “species”—closer to our modern idea of, for example, “dogs” (including wolves, coyotes, domestic dogs, foxes, jackals, and dingoes), “cats,” “elephants,” or in this case, “bears.”

Creation biologists have studied the living and extinct bears to determine if they should all be considered to be part of the same “kind” (a discipline in Creation science called baraminology [bare-uh-min-AW-low-gee]). They have concluded that the eight bear species today (and the extinct species of bears) all belong to the same “kind.” That means that since bears would be considered “unclean creatures” under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 11:27), two representatives of the bear kind would have been on the Ark (Genesis 7:2). Those two bears would have had enough genetic information in their genes to produce the variety of bears we see today. From those two bears on the Ark 4,500+ years ago came the diversity within the bear kind that we see today (as well as the fossil record and extinct bears) as they reproduced in the centuries following the Flood.

In the same way that there is variety within the “human kind” (do you look exactly the same as someone from China, India, or even your parents?), there is a lot of variety within the bear kind that God created. The fact that there is an immense amount of variety within the hundreds of “kinds” of creatures on the Earth says something about our God: He likes variety. Imagine if only one species existed on the planet, and every representative of that species looked and acted precisely the same way: no variety of colorful flowers or birds; no variety of animals; no variety in smells or tastes or sounds; and no variety of even humans—just one look and one behavior. Would that be boring? The variety we see on the planet makes it exciting to look at and study, and helps us to know that God cares about our happiness and wants us to enjoy life. So the infinite examples of variety in the creation help us to know more about our infinite Creator. God can be seen in “the things that are made,” including the mighty bear (Romans 1:20).
GRIZZLIES are "BEARY" HELPFUL

DAVE MILLER

THE FAMOUS GRIZZLY BEAR IS ACTUALLY SIMPLY A NORTH AMERICAN BROWN BEAR. AROUND 55,000 WILD GRIZZLY BEARS LIVE IN NORTH AMERICA—MOSTLY IN ALASKA. THESE AMAZING CREATURES VARY IN SIZE AND COLOR largely due to their diet. Grizzlies that live inland from the coast in the Rocky Mountains are typically smaller and spend nearly half of their lives (5-7 months) hibernating in dens. But grizzlies that live near the coast have better access to food sources and spend less time in dens. Where food is very plentiful year round, some grizzly bears skip hibernation altogether. So you see, grizzlies show design: God created the grizzlies to hibernate longer in areas where food is less available!

OTHER FEATURES OF GRIZZLY DESIGN:

God made grizzlies to be important “seed distributors.” For example, when grizzlies consume fruit, the seeds in the fruit are carried in the grizzly’s body to other locations and deposited so that those fruit plants are able to grow there as well.

When grizzlies forage for tree roots, plant bulbs, or ground squirrels, their claws stir up the soil which, in turn, creates greater plant diversity. Stirring up the soil also causes nitrogen to be dug up from lower soil layers, making nitrogen more available. And that’s not all! When grizzlies grab salmon from streams and drag them into the forest, more nitrogen is infused into the forest.

God designed the grizzly to have a major impact on the ecosystem. Grizzlies were designed by God to regulate prey populations of grizzlies, which also helps to prevent overgrazing in forests. When grizzlies were removed from an area, the plants that they consumed in large quantities increased. By changing the density of plants in the area, the population sizes of migratory birds were decreased.

And when grizzlies fish for salmon along the coasts of Alaska, they often only eat the skin, brain, and eggs of the fish. But they’re not being wasteful! They are providing a food source for gulls, ravens, and foxes which also eat salmon. All four animal populations are benefitted.

God’s complex designs are “beary” incredible!

WHEN EUROPEANS BEGAN EXPLORING AND SETTLING IN AUSTRALIA CENTURIES AGO, THEY REFERRED TO koalas as “koala bears.” Apparently, they thought these animals were a part of the bear family. The truth is, however, these cute, furry, grayish, tree-climbing, teddy-bear-like animals are not bears at all. Rather, they are marsupials (mar-SOOP-ee-uls). And like all marsupials, they live the first part of their lives in their mothers’ pouches.

Unlike kangaroos, whose pouches open at the top, koala pouches open toward the bottom. When a mother koala gives birth to a baby koala (called a “joey”), the lima-bean-sized offspring makes its way to the cozy pouch perfectly designed by God. If left up to the chance processes of evolution, one might think that the joey could fall out of the apparent backwards-facing pouch. But there really is nothing “backwards” about koala pouches. God created koala pouches for the koala’s purposes. Mother koalas were designed with a strong muscle at the pouch opening, which allows them to keep their joeys securely in their pouches as they climb trees.

One of the strangest stages of a koala’s life begins when it is about six months old. At this age, in addition to drinking its mother’s milk in the pouch, it begins to look for and eat some of its mother’s poop. (Yes. Poop.) As gross as it is to discuss, this dietary stage of life is very important to the future health of a koala. Why? Because it is through its mother’s feces (and especially the soft and runny part known as “pap”) that a baby koala acquires the vital bacteria that it will need to one day be able to eat and properly digest eucalyptus leaves (which are a poison to most animals, yet make up the staple diet of grown koalas).

How does a baby koala know that in addition to drinking its mother’s milk, it desperately needs the (disgusting) “pap” of its mother? How can unintelligent, mindless evolutionary processes logically explain how koalas “learned” they need to eat poop when they’re young in order to digest eucalyptus leaves when they are old? Does that sound like blind chance? Not at all. In truth, koalas testify to an intelligent Creator Who gave them exactly what they needed to survive (…even if it does seem a little gross to us).

Koalas get most of the water they need from the moisture in eucalyptus leaves. In fact, the name koala comes from an old Australian word meaning “no water.”
Dear Kids,
I really want to hear from you this year. Please send me your questions to the following address:
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

Thanks!
Digger Doug

1. The world's largest land-living predator.  
2. Extinct bear that lived in caves.  
4. A broader term than species.  
5. What a koala "bear" is actually categorized as.  
6. Another name for the North American brown bear.  
7. The study of animals to determine if they are part of the same "kind."  
9. Tiny bumps on the pads of Polar bear paws that give them traction.  
11. Day of the Creation Week on which bears were created.  
12. Number of bears that would have been on Noah's ark.

True or False
1. The idea of a "species" is a modern concept that would not have existed at the time of Moses.
2. The American Giant Short-Faced Bear lives in Tennessee.
3. Polar bears can grow to be 10 feet long and weigh over 2,000 pounds.
4. "Koala bears" are true bears.
5. Some grizzly bears skip hibernation altogether.
6. God designed koalas with a strong muscle at the pouch opening, which allows them to keep their joeys securely in their pouches as they climb trees.
7. Polar bears can use their keen sense of smell to locate seals a mile away.
8. The name koala comes from an old Australian word meaning "no bear."
10. God can be seen in "the things that are made," including the mighty bear.

Unscramble the following words:
1. zyzgirl
2. palsarmiu
3. sinseeg
4. raeb
5. aterinoc

Solve, find, and circle:

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1. Discuss how helpful grizzly bears are to the natural world around them.
2. Explain how Polar bears can survive in the freezing cold.
Polar Bears

Kyle Butt

This Massive Creature Can Grow to Be 10 Feet Long and Weigh Over 2,000 Pounds. It is the World’s Largest Land Living Predator. With its 42 razor-sharp teeth, it can consume 100 pounds of food in a single meal. Although many pictures and postcards present this animal as cute and cuddly, the polar bear is one of the world’s most efficient predators.

Polar bears live in the Arctic region near the outer edges of the North Pole. This area is freezing cold, and can reach temperatures of -50 degrees Fahrenheit. Polar bears, however, are not bothered by the extreme cold, because God designed them with special features that help them stay warm. These bears have two fur coats, an outer coat composed of longer hairs that are transparent, and a thick inner coat. In addition to this thick fur, God designed polar bears with a layer of blubber that can be as much as four inches thick.

Have you ever walked on ice? If you have, you know that it is very slippery. How do huge polar bears keep from slipping and sliding all over the ice? Again, God gave the bears special features. Polar bears have massive paws that can be 12 inches across. These paws are so big that they act like snow shoes and keep the bears from sinking deeply into snow. Imagine a paw as wide as a one-foot ruler! Also, on the pads of their paws, the bears have tiny bumps called papillae (puh-PILL-ee) that give them traction. It is like they have been given their own set of snow tires.

Polar bears have an amazing sense of smell. They eat mostly seals, and can use their noses to locate them a mile away. Sometimes, however, they eat walruses (which can be twice as large as the bears) and they have been known to eat muskoxen, whales, berries, birds, eggs, carcasses of dead animals, and even other polar bears!

God designed polar bears to be the perfect polar predators. He gave them all the necessary tools to stay warm, keep their balance on ice, smell food far away, and hunt successfully. Polar bears could not have evolved. Without all of their God-given tools, they could not survive in their frigid habitat.