

The Taxonomy of Barney: Evidence of convergence in hominid evolution

by Edward C. Theriot^{1,4}, Arthur E. Bogan^{2,5}, Earle E. Spamer^{3,4}

Introduction

The evolution of hominids is a controversial subject. The fraudulent case of "Piltdown Man" has charged this area of research with wariness, and the tragic loss of the specimens of Peking Man has introduced political intrigue. Of course, one should not overlook the impassioned conflicts surrounding Creationist viewpoints of the rise of Man,⁶ but we are unable to compare these data with ours, so we only present our data.

The Problem

According to *National Geographic*⁷, hominids evolved first on the African continent, radiating to occupy the other continents during the past tens to hundreds of thousands of years. Current opinions put forth by anthropologists indicate that several genera and species evolved, of which only *Homo* exists today. The only evidence on which these suppositions are based are skeletal remains, preserved mostly as fragments. Cladistic studies of the characteristics of the bone fragments have led scientists to derive the evolutionary relationships between these different hominid animals.

However, from field evidence and empirical observations, we have discovered a previously unrecognized form of hominid, alive today, which is presumably globally distributed. It is certainly found in North America, where we first observed it. Its external morphology is completely unlike hominid morphology, for which reason it has been until now overlooked. Its discovery has immediate and far-reaching implications on understanding hominid evolution.

Materials and Methods

In February 1994, we observed on television an animal which was there identified as a dinosaur, Barney.⁸ Its behavioral characteristics suggested that it was dissimilar to the diverse dinosaurian faunas that are so well documented.⁹ Even accounting for the probability that some dinosaurs were socially closely organized, and that some even may have been warm-blooded, Barney's animated attitude, communication skills, and worshipful relationship with juvenile specimens of *Homo*, all pointed to an unrecognized aspect of reptile form and function.¹⁰

To test the hypothesis that Barney is a reptile descended from the true dinosaurs, we went into the field in order to capture and study a living specimen. This we accomplished with remarkable ease, as Barney was advertised to be appearing at a local shopping mall. In a secure area, we established an observation post, which met the immediate need for controlled documentation of Barney's external physical characteristics.

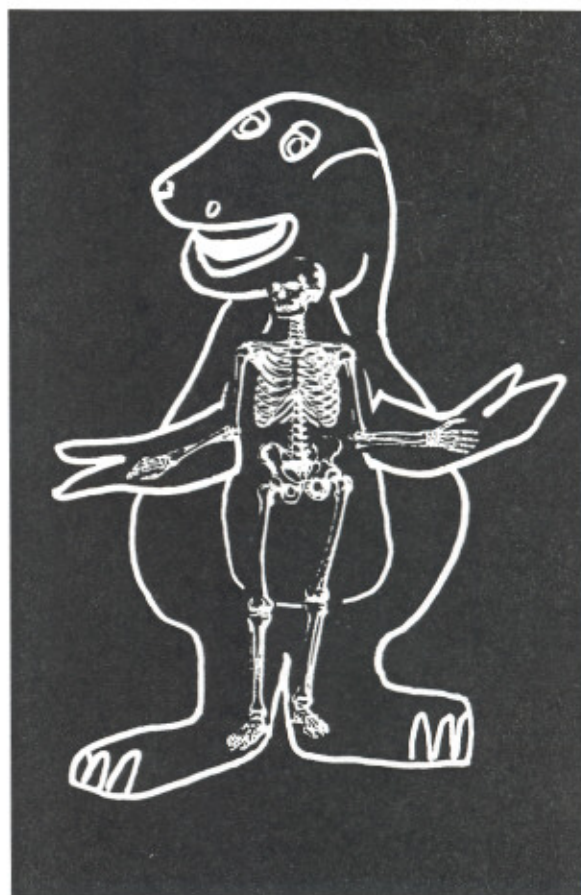


Figure 1. Composite image of Barney showing external morphology and skeletal structure.

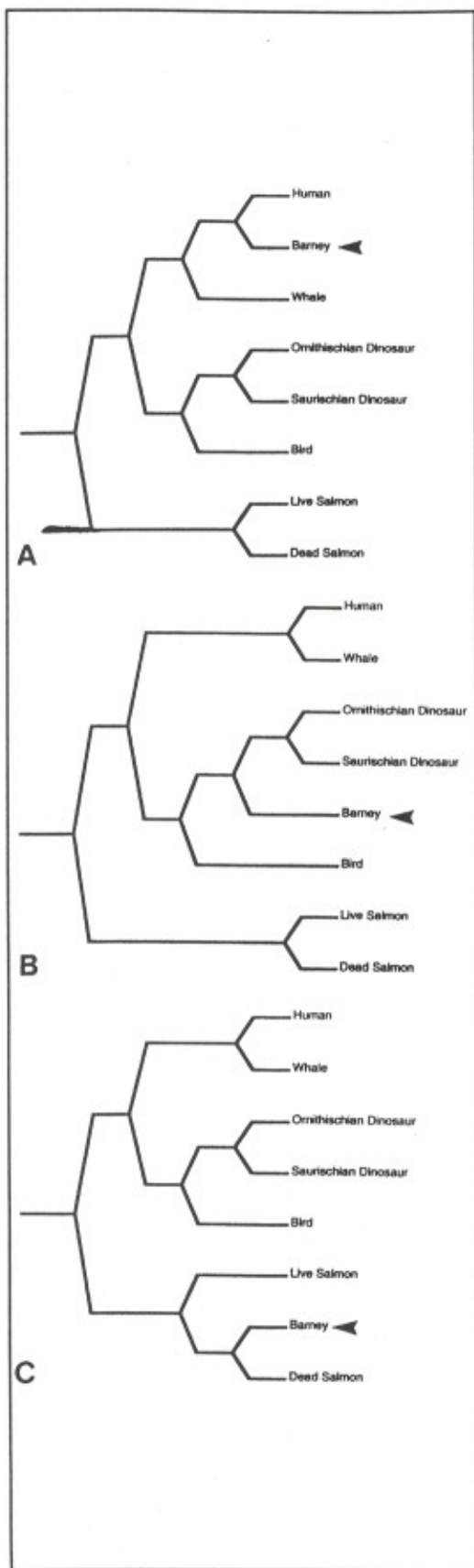


Figure 2. Derived trees comparing Barney to A) humans (the most parsimonious tree, 29 steps), B) dinosaurs (32 steps), and C) salmon (31 steps).

Additional instrumentation was required to determine the internal structure of Barney. We elected not to sacrifice the specimen, as we believed that this would have had a negative impact on the associated fauna (the juvenile specimens of *Homo*). Mostly non-invasive procedures were designed to obtain our data. A wide-field X-ray emitter was built to obtain images of the skeletal structure of Barney. Unexposed X-ray film plates were hung decoratively on the wall near where Barney was expected to show itself; they were not noticed by any of the human subjects, nor by mall security. The X-ray emitter had only short exposure times, thus we believe that the human subjects in proximity to Barney were in no danger greater than were the residents of Chernoble.

Analysis

The external morphology of Barney belies its mammalian affinity. Evolutionarily this suggests some selective advantage, to have the external form of a dinosaurian reptile and the internal structure and abilities of a hominid mammal. This view is supported by Barney's observed ecological niche and behavioral characteristics, where it is always in association with juvenile hominids. The association seems to be one of co-dependence, and we present conjecture that Barney has evolved into the niche occupied by juvenile hominids, who by their own nature occupy a very protected part of hominid social structure, thus Barney would effectively ensure its survival by integrating itself into this environment.

This still does not explain the taxonomic relationship of Barney to other vertebrates. To examine this, we compared various physical characters of Barney with the characters of other mammals, reptiles, birds, and fish (Table 1). We selected characters based on their affinities across the spectrum of vertebrates. We added or discarded characters until we achieved the results we believed, then stopped. Barney was compared to humans, whales, ornithischian and saurischian dinosaurs, and birds. In the cladistic diagrams our outgroups are live and dead salmon.

Selected characters were scored and run through the Maclade program. We first derived the most parsimonious tree, in which Barney was shown to be most similar to humans; the tree has 29 steps (Fig. 2a). Then Barney was grouped with the other vertebrates to determine how many steps the trees produced. Since Barney has external morphometric affinities to the bipedal ornithischian dinosaurs, we were most interested in the results of the tree in which Barney was grouped with them. This less parsimonious tree contains 32 steps (Fig. 2b). We compared Barney to the outgroups of live and dead salmon. We correctly predicted that Barney was very unlike a live salmon, but we were very surprised to find that the tree comparing Barney to a dead salmon (Fig. 3) was more parsimonious (31 steps, Fig. 2c) even than the tree which grouped Barney with the dinosaurs.

Table 1. Characters Used to Compare Barney to Other Vertebrates

	Barney	Mammal		Dinosaur		Bird	Salmon	
		Human	Whale	Ornithischian	Saurischian		(Live)	(Dead)
Dermal Structure	fuzz	hair	hairless	scales	scales	feathers	scales	fuzz
Tooth Structure	heterodont	heterodont	homodont	homodont	homodont	homodont	heterodont	heterodont
Pelvic Structure	mammalian	mammalian	mammalian	ornithischian	saurischian	ornithischian	ichthyschian	ichthyischar
Claws/ Nails	yes	yes	no	yes	?	yes	no	no
Fusion of Extremi- ties	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes
No. of Leg Segments	2	2	0	3	3	3	0	0
Coelom	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes
Oral Display	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes
Tail	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Mammary Glands	no	yes	yes	?	?	no	no	no
Lungs	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Live Birth	no	yes	yes	no	\no	no	no	non- productive
Binocular Vision	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no vision
Blood	warm	warm	warm	?	?	warm	cold	cold or gel



Figure 3. A dead salmon with hominids. Note that Barney more closely resembles the hominids and the dead salmon than it does even the dinosaurs (not shown).



Figure 4. Example of territorial display in hominids.

The remarkable similarity of Barney to dead salmon emphasizes the distinctly non-reptilian characters. In each, the dermal covering is fuzz, a coelom is present, and an oral display character is present and independent from the dentition. This last character is of particular note. In Barney, the oral display (see Fig. 1) appears to serve no active function. There is no similar feature among the reptiles. This non-functional display is similar to the terminal sexual display character of the salmon. However, since Barney appears not to be in a reproductive mode, we have compared the oral display to one of territorial demarcation. We have observed similar means of territorial display in hominids (Fig. 4), which again reinforces Barney's affinity to the Hominidae rather than the Reptilia.

The very animated, social behavior we observed in Barney also indicates an affinity to hominids. The behavior suggests warm-bloodedness, which we sought to document in the specimen we studied. This required a temporarily invasive procedure, which we performed when the subject was found alone in a hallway. The subject was uncooperative and escaped, thus our measurements of Barney's body temperature are inconclusive. We suspect that our failure to complete the procedure was due to inadequate instrumentation (Fig. 5).

Implications for Evolution

We have demonstrated that Barney is most similar to humans. Yet it is more like a dead salmon than even the dinosaurs to which group it purports to belong! We interpret this to be a case of convergence in evolution, where the ancestral Barney has evolved to occupy the same ecological niche as that now containing juvenile hominids.

This poses significant questions to the interpretation of the fossil record. Non-skeletal materials are rarely preserved as fossils. It is therefore likely that the only part of the Barney animal to be found as a fossil is its skeleton, and we raise the question of misidentification of fossil remains. The criteria hitherto used to identify the skeletons of early humans and their precursors are non-indicative. If a skeleton of a proto-human cannot be distinguished from that of Barney, there is a likelihood that some of the skeletal specimens of early hominids—"Lucy" for example—may in fact be the skeleton of a Barney ancestor.

Conclusion

Barney is not a dinosaur. It is a hitherto unknown member of the Family Hominidae, which we name *Pretendosaurus barneyi* (from the Latin, *pretendo*, meaning "allege, simulate, pretend, or pretender," and *saurus*, "lizard"). Its

fossil record is presently unknown, but we infer from our data that it may extend to the Early Paleolithic Era. A complete reexamination of fossils said to be ancestors of humans is called for. The cultural cliché of coexistence of dinosaurs and humans, so richly represented in film (e.g. *King Kong* and *The Flintstones*), similarly may benefit from reexamination in light of the evidence seen in Barney, from which some significant sociological and anthropological conclusions may be derived.

That Barney can be sighted today in numerous places (Fig. 6) is a sure indication of a widespread occurrence of the Barney animal, perhaps even coextensive with humans. Its certain identification may be complicated by morphological changes during its life cycle. It is possible that the development of the fuzzy epidermis, and the coelom separating it from the skeleton, are characters which form at sexual maturity. The juvenile stage may be exhibited solely by an immature hominid form, which presents very serious questions as to the correct identification of human children.

Notes

1. The order of authors was determined by lot.
2. The order of authors was determined without my knowledge.
3. The order of authors was determined by the last person who had the manuscript.
4. Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA.
5. Freshwater Molluscan Research, Sewell, NJ, which of course has nothing to do with hominid evolution.
6. We refer to the genus *Homo*, but it reads less well to discuss "the rise of *Homo*"; to speak of "the rise of Man" is far more noble.
7. Virtually every issue since 1888.
8. Public Television Network. The program "Barney" depicts the animal in close, compatible relationship with children. Together they sing, dance, and discuss world issues of concern to pre-school age children. By logical induction, there is more than one specimen of this animal.
9. D. B. Weishampel, P. Dodson, and H. Osmólska (eds.), *The Dinosauria*, Univ. California Press, 1990.
10. That Barney is purported to be a dinosaur is acceptable, even though the dinosaurs are thought to be extinct. We initially believed that Barney could be descended from dinosaurian lineages, much as birds are thought to be so descended from these reptiles.

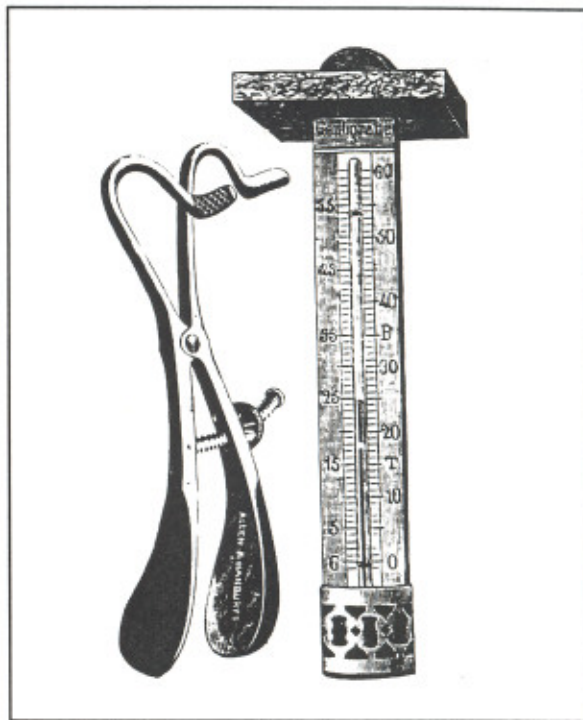


Figure 5. Instruments used to establish the blood temperature of Barney.



Figure 6. Barney.