

(no subject)

The Urth list — 21 messages, 7 voices, 07 Jan 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5877>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 01:46

David Stockhoff: So what does this say about the Gondwanaland hypothesis?

Well, if it was just "Africa" that might hint at the evolutionary origin of primates, including humanity. But Gondwanaland predates the evolution of primates (I had to look that up to be sure. Did Wolfe?)

I do like the idea of a faerie explanation. But perhaps Wolfe is suggesting that such things predate even primates. Sorry for repeating but perhaps as they are something as basic as the Shadow which must be formed when God creates both Light and Objects. Again, shadows are dark, imitative and indeterminate in size, shape and number.

And again I'd like to make the comparison to Inhum. First we think they are just vampires. A variation of a human being. Then we find they are scaly, clawed and reptilian in nature. But then, the big revelation at the end of RttW..they have external fertilization. So they are more primitive than reptiles. (maybe fish even? heh@ Fomalhaut= Inhum's Mouth).

Or maybe their basic structure is a parasitic vine. Or perhaps something even more basic and primitive than that, by extrapolation....perhaps simply a..shadow?

I can't say it is clear and obvious but I get the impression Wolfe keeps suggesting ever more primitive origins for Inhum. If so, perhaps the same for abo/shadow kids.

Jerry Friedman — 07 Jan 2011, 02:57 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

...

And again I'd like to make the comparison to Inhum. First we think they are just
vampires. A variation of a human being. Then we find they are scaly, clawed and
reptilian in nature. But then, the big revelation at the end of RttW..they have
external fertilization. So they are more primitive than reptiles. (maybe fish
even? heh@ Fomalhaut= Inhum's Mouth).

...

I'm not going to try to check whether I've said this when you made similar statements--I'm just going to point out that it's not the inhum's nature that's reptilian; it's their appearance. They're nothing like Earth reptiles in their behavior. And I see no discrepancy between reptilian appearance and external fertilization. I see no reason evolution on Blue-Green should have gone the same way it did on Earth, no reason we have to adjust our ideas about them when we learn about their fertilization or even if they have some mysterious essential link to trees and vines.

Jerry Friedman

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 08:37 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman: it's not the inhumis' nature that's reptilian; it's their appearance. They're nothing like Earth reptiles in their behavior. And I see no discrepancy between reptilian appearance and external fertilization. I see no reason evolution on Blue-Green should have gone the same way it did on Earth, no reason we have to adjust our ideas about them when we learn about their fertilization or even if they have some mysterious essential link to trees and vines.

I think we have another example of personal experience biasing interpretation. For me, being a reptile MEANS internal fertilization and terrestrial eggs. That was their major evolutionary adaptation, allowing vertebrates to colonize the land and join their plant and insect cousins there.

For me it is as though Gene Wolfe spent three books noting the bird-like appearance of Inhumis and then at the end reveals- they have no wings. That would have to be a significant solution to some series mystery, because an assumption of wings is something (I think) we all share with regard to birds.

I don't know if Gene Wolfe shares my perception that internal fertilization is an essential part of being a reptile or whether he just thinks of them as being scaly, creepy things. I can't know. On the one hand he is scientific and detail oriented. On the other hand he seems to have conflated monkeys and apes in a couple spots in his work. (a baboon is big, but definitely a monkey).

I lean toward Wolfe recognizing the essentiality of reptilian internal fertilization because it fits patterns I keep seeing. One is the increasing simplicity of their origin...

But the other may even more central...Wolfe is saying, at the end, that shapeshifting Inhumis need a body of surface water to reproduce. In a 12 book series in which fish and flooding seem to be recurring themes, I think this is likely to be a significant revelation.

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 13:29 · follows Lee Berman

On the other hand he seems to have conflated monkeys and apes in a couple spots in his work. (a baboon is big, but definitely a monkey).

I retract this. I was thinking about how one of the monkeys associated with Father Inire's name, Inuus sylvanus, is commonly called the Barbary Ape because, though clearly a monkey, has no tail.

Did a little checking and in the past (in less rigorous taxonomic times), baboons were also generally called "apes", probably due to their size and because they are more terrestrial than arboreal and their tails aren't prominent in their most frequent posture- sitting on the ground.

So, now I think Wolfe calling a monkey an "ape" may be a purposeful way of maintaining the archaic sense of language in BotNS rather than an error. (I doubt anyone but me cares, but had to issue the retraction anyway. I shouldn't have doubted Wolfe's science acumen).

António Pedro Marques — 07 Jan 2011, 13:51 · in reply to Lee Berman

Aren't 'monkey' and 'ape' synonyms of 'simian', popularly speaking?

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 14:21 · follows António Pedro Marques

Antonio Pedro Marques: Aren't 'monkey' and 'ape' synonyms of 'simian', popularly speaking?

Well, the primate order includes prosimians (lemurs, pottos, etc.) and simians which are monkeys and apes (and humans depending on how you want to divide). There is a significant difference between monkeys and apes, which is easiest to recognize by presence or absence of a tail (with some exceptions- a couple monkeys have no tail, a couple fossil apes do have a tail, but generally the rule holds).

I realize my background makes me a bit pedantic on the subject but I sometimes wish the general public could at least get the tail part right. Apes (esp. the "great" ones) are so much closer to us humans than monkeys. I usually hold my tongue on the subject in casual conversation but I am glad to think Wolfe isn't getting it wrong.

David Stockhoff — 07 Jan 2011, 15:07 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

I think that is basically what Lee is saying in his retraction, and I agree, especially when the situation allows for some slippage (e.g., 20,000 years have passed).

On 1/7/2011 8:51 AM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

Aren't 'monkey' and 'ape' synonyms of 'simian', popularly speaking?

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 15:26 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff: I think that is basically what Lee is saying in his retraction, and I agree, especially when the situation allows for some slippage (e.g., 20,000 years have passed).

Well, to clarify further, if I'm watching TV and a chimpanzee is shown and somebody says, "oh what a cute monkey!" I may or may not say, "ape, actually", depending on who is speaking.

When I read Robinson Crusoe or some other old book and a character remarks, "the ape didst gnaw upon its own tail", I can appreciate the archaic use of the word. And I think maybe Wolfe was going for that sort of usage to go along with his other archaic terms and names rather than making a linnaean error.

David Stockhoff — 07 Jan 2011, 15:30 · in reply to Lee Berman

Exactly. I'm with you.

On 1/7/2011 10:26 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

David Stockhoff: I think that is basically what Lee is saying in his retraction, and I agree, especially when the situation allows for some slippage (e.g., 20,000 years have passed).

Well, to clarify further, if I'm watching TV and a chimpanzee is shown and somebody says, "oh what a cute monkey!" I may or may not say, "ape, actually", depending on who is speaking.

When I read Robinson Crusoe or some other old book and a character remarks, "the ape didst gnaw upon its own tail", I can appreciate the archaic use of the word. And I think maybe Wolfe was going for that sort of usage to go along with his other archaic terms and names rather than making a linnaean error.

Adam Thornton IO — 07 Jan 2011, 16:20 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On Fri, 07 Jan 2011 13:51:55 +0000, António Pedro Marques
<antonio at gmail.com> wrote:
Aren't 'monkey' and 'ape' synonyms of 'simian', popularly speaking?

Oook.

António Pedro Marques — 07 Jan 2011, 16:28 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote (07-01-2011 14:21):

Antonio Pedro Marques:

Aren't 'monkey' and 'ape' synonyms of 'simian', popularly speaking?

Well, the primate order includes prosimians (lemurs, pottos, etc.) and simians which are monkeys and apes (and humans depending on how you want to divide). There is a significant difference between monkeys and apes, which is easiest to recognize by presence or absence of a tail (with some exceptions- a couple monkeys have no tail, a couple fossil apes do have a tail, but generally the rule holds).

I realize my background makes me a bit pedantic on the subject but I sometimes wish the general public could at least get the tail part right. Apes (esp. the "great" ones) are so much closer to us humans than monkeys.

So 'monkey' and 'ape' are synonyms of 'simian', popularly speaking?

I usually hold my tongue on the subject in casual conversation but I am glad to think Wolfe isn't getting it wrong.

Scientists can't expect the general public to follow their terminology accurately even when their terminology is original, let alone when it's a redefinition of lay terms.

Though it irks me that people call palms trees, as some here possibly already know.

António Pedro Marques — 07 Jan 2011, 16:42 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote (07-01-2011 15:26):

David Stockhoff:

I think that is basically what Lee is saying in his retraction, and I agree, especially when the situation allows for some slippage (e.g., 20,000 years have passed).

Well, to clarify further, if I'm watching TV and a chimpanzee is shown and somebody says, "oh what a cute monkey!" I may or may not say, "ape, actually", depending on who is speaking.

When I read Robinson Crusoe or some other old book and a character remarks, "the ape didst gnaw upon its own tail", I can appreciate the archaic use of the word. And I think maybe Wolfe was going for that sort of usage to go along with his other archaic terms and names rather than making a linnaean error.

It would seem that you feel calling an ape a monkey is demeaning to the ape, and calling a monkey an ape is demeaning to the word 'ape'. That's an angle I hadn't met previously. In many languages have a term for 'monkey', but not necessarily for 'ape', and chimpanzees tend to be the archetypal monkey (due to the small size). So I just don't see how one can expect that modern english terminology is correctly followed.

Would it be unreasonable to call tuataras, crocodiles and dinosaurs 'lizards'? Legless lizards 'snakes'?

(OT: Some cladists feel so good calling birds 'dinosaurs' that they've successfully imposed that terminology on the interwebs. Of course, then they had to redefine dinosaurs to exclude the ancestors of mammals. So that what you used to call dinosaurs now have to be 'non-avian-dinosaurs + stem-mammals-and-whatnot'. It just doesn't strike me as a useful exercise. Paraphyletic witch-hunt is a never ending endeavour by definition. One should accept that there is evil-paraphyletic and reasonable-paraphyletic.)

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 18:06 · follows António Pedro Marques

Oh sheesh, Antonio. I thought this thread was exhausted. I'll do my best to address your questions, hopefully without straying too far, too long from Gene Wolfe stuff.

It would seem that you feel calling an ape a monkey is demeaning to the ape, and calling a monkey an ape is demeaning to the word 'ape'. That's an angle I hadn't met previously.

Heh, well, if nobility is defined as "close to human" then I guess apes are more noble than monkeys. Bigger and more intelligent, surely. But what about evolutionary success? Monkeys are far more adaptable to changing environments and as a result are a much more successful group than apes who are mostly on the verge of extinction (unless, as Desmond Morris does, you consider *H. sapiens* a "naked ape").

many languages have a term for 'monkey', but not necessarily for 'ape',

Yes, I am aware of that. (and it is a good point). My pedantic tendencies are reserved for native English speakers and in my experience, many/most educated people in that category do know the ape-monkey difference.

chimpanzees tend to be the archetypal monkey (due to the small size).

Chimps are bigger than any (in english) monkey. Only the biggest male baboons come close. We might think of chimps (excl. bonobos) as small because of the prevalence of using the cute juvenile kind on TV shows and such. But full-grown chimps are big, strong and ugly and often kinda mean. Rarely seen on TV outside Nat'l Geog.

Would it be unreasonable to call tuataras, crocodiles and dinosaurs 'lizards'? Legless lizards 'snakes'?

Depends. I wouldn't expect the general public to know that a tuatara is not a lizard and that a legless lizard is not a snake. They are rare and they LOOK like their more prevalent cousins. (I don't even complain much if a rabbit is considered a rodent by the public). I think dinosaurs not being lizards is a bit more common knowledge these days, despite the word origin of "-saur". And most basic science classes would teach that reptiles are broken into the four main groupings so lizards and crocodiles can be separated.

Some cladists feel so good calling birds 'dinosaurs' that they've successfully imposed that terminology on the interwebs.

I say nix on that. Birds are even less "thunder lizards" than lizards. Let's let the 160 year old convention remain that the word "dinosaur" implies "extinct".

then they had to redefine dinosaurs to exclude the ancestors of mammalians. So that what you used to call dinosaurs now have to be 'non-avian-dinosaurs + stem-mammals-and-whatnot'.

This part is in little doubt in modern paleontology. Dinosaurs (being warm-blooded) did give rise to birds but not mammals. In fact the earliest mammals (derived from reptilian therapsids) are notably older than the oldest dinosaurs. Mammals had to spend 100 million years staying small, waiting for the dinosaurs to move out before they made their big expansion. (we can be pretty sure some later dinosaurs had feathers but none had hair).

Mark Millman — 07 Jan 2011, 18:11 · in reply to Lee Berman

Dear Mr. Berman,

On Friday 7 January 2010, you wrote:

Jerry Friedman: it's not the inhumis nature that's reptilian; it's their appearance. They're nothing like Earth reptiles in their behavior. ?And I see no discrepancy between reptilian appearance and external fertilization. ?I see no reason evolution on Blue-Green should have gone the same way it did on Earth, no reason we have to adjust our ideas about them when we learn about their fertilization or even if they have some mysterious essential link to trees and vines.

I think we have another example of personal experience biasing interpretation. For me, being a reptile MEANS internal fertilization and terrestrial eggs. That was their major evolutionary adaptation, allowing vertebrates to colonize the land and join their plant and insect cousins there.

For me it is as though Gene Wolfe spent three books noting the bird-like appearance of Inhumis and then at the end reveals- they have no

wings. That would have to be a significant solution to some series mystery, because an assumption of wings is something (I think) we all share with regard to birds.

I don't know if Gene Wolfe shares my perception that internal fertilization is an essential part of being a reptile or whether he just thinks of them as being scaly, creepy things. I can't know. On the one hand he is scientific and detail oriented. On the other hand he seems to have conflated monkeys and apes in a couple spots in his work. (a baboon is big, but definitely a monkey).

I lean toward Wolfe recognizing the essentiality of reptilian internal fertilization because it fits patterns I keep seeing. One is the increasing simplicity of their origin...

But the other may even more central...Wolfe is saying, at the end, that shapeshifting Inhumani need a body of surface water to reproduce. In a 12 book series in which fish and flooding seem to be recurring themes, I think this is likely to be a significant revelation.

And later, you also wrote:
When I read Robinson Crusoe or some other old book and a character remarks, "the ape didst gnaw upon its own tail", I can appreciate the archaic use of the word. And I think maybe Wolfe was going for that sort of usage to go along with his other archaic terms and names rather than making a Linnaean error.

In that case, it may interest you to know that, at roughly the same time that the term "ape" comprised large monkeys such as baboons, the term "reptile" comprised amphibians--which typically have externally fertilized eggs that require open water.

Best,

Mark Millman

Jerry Friedman — 07 Jan 2011, 18:35 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

On the other hand he seems to have conflated monkeys and apes in a couple spots in his work.

(a baboon is big, but definitely a monkey).

I retract this. I was thinking about how one of the monkeys associated with Father Inire's name, *Inuus sylvanus*, is commonly called the Barbary Ape because, though clearly a monkey, has no tail. Did a little checking and in the past (in less rigorous taxonomic times), baboons were also

generally called "apes", probably due to their size and because they are more terrestrial than arboreal

and their tails aren't prominent in their most frequent posture- sitting on the ground.

In fact, according to the NSOED, all monkeys were once called "apes"; that was the only word in English. "Monkey" first appeared in the 16th century.

It doesn't give information on when biologists started to tell people to use "ape" for the tailless ones or specifically for what the gibbons and the great apes. My feeling is that the distinction has taken hold better than most prescribed distinctions, and the words aren't synonyms--though as you point out, people do still refer to chimps as monkeys. But this is getting off-topic, so if Antonio wants to know more about current usage, he can always ask in alt.usage.english.

So I agree that if Severian calls a big monkey an ape, that's just because his society or his part of it isn't concerned with taxonomic precision, as our ancestors weren't.

Jerry Friedman

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 18:55 · follows Jerry Friedman

Mark Millman: In that case, it may interest you to know that, at roughly the same time that the term "ape" comprised large monkeys such as baboons, the term "reptile" comprised amphibians--which typically have externally fertilized eggs that require open water.

LMAO. Good one Mark! I could haggle over differences between the Commonwealth and Blue but I won't risk the possibility of diluting such an excellent response!

Jordon Flato — 07 Jan 2011, 19:34 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

But But But...does that mean the man apes of Saltus might have been MAN MONKEYS!!?!??

On Jan 7, 2011 10:37 AM, "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:
From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

On the other hand he seems to have conflated monkeys and apes in a couple spots in his work...

In fact, according to the NSOED, all monkeys were once called "apes"; that was the only word in English. "Monkey" first appeared in the 16th century.

It doesn't give information on when biologists started to tell people to use "ape" for the tailless ones or specifically for what the gibbons and the great apes. My feeling is that the distinction

has taken hold better than most prescribed distinctions, and the words aren't synonyms--though as you point out, people do still refer to chimps as monkeys. But this is getting off-topic, so if Antonio wants to know more about current usage, he can always ask in alt.usage.english.

So I agree that if Severian calls a big monkey an ape, that's just because his society or his part of it isn't concerned with taxonomic precision, as our ancestors weren't.

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 07 Jan 2011, 19:39 · in reply to Mark Millman

Ooh!

On 1/7/2011 1:11 PM, Mark Millman wrote:

In that case, it may interest you to know that, at roughly the same time that the term "ape" comprised large monkeys such as baboons, the term "reptile" comprised amphibians--which typically have externally fertilized eggs that require open water.

António Pedro Marques — 07 Jan 2011, 20:33 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Lee Berman<severiansola at hotmail.com>

On the other hand he seems to have conflated monkeys and apes in a couple spots in his work. (a baboon is big, but definitely a monkey).

I retract this. I was thinking about how one of the monkeys associated with Father Inire's name, *Inuus sylvanus*, is commonly called the Barbary Ape because, though clearly a monkey, has no tail. Did a little checking and in the past (in less rigorous taxonomic times), baboons were also generally called "apes", probably due to their size and because they are more terrestrial than arboreal and their tails aren't prominent in their most frequent posture- sitting on the ground.

In fact, according to the NSOED, all monkeys were once called "apes"; that was the only word in English. "Monkey" first appeared in the 16th century.

It doesn't give information on when biologists started to tell people to use "ape" for the tailless ones or specifically for what the gibbons and the great apes. My feeling is that the distinction has taken hold better than most prescribed distinctions, and the words aren't synonyms--though as you point out, people do still refer to chimps as monkeys. But this is getting off-topic, so if Antonio wants to know more about current usage, he can always ask in alt.usage.english.

No, I don't mind those folks visiting every once in a while, but I don't think I'd like to live there. I'll take your word for it that the distinction stuck... (though I doubt biologists are responsible for that)

So I agree that if Severian calls a big monkey an ape, that's just because his society or his part of it isn't concerned with taxonomic precision, as our ancestors weren't.

...which suggests that GW made them on purpose not make the distinction.

From what I've seen, the specialisation of _ape_ was chiefly based on the tail. Who's to say apes on Urth haven't reacquired tails (Dollo, I know, but who made Dollo arbiter?). Like with chicken's teeth, the DNA is there, waiting to be used. After all, the urthian fauna isn't identical to ours; Urth = Earth or not, we're told the story takes place millions of years in the future, and a million years is an awful lot of time for speciation. There may be more species of fox than man because man has culture to address the environment, but what culture other apes have is limited.

Lee Berman — 07 Jan 2011, 20:41 · follows António Pedro Marques

Jordon Flato: But But But...does that mean the man apes of Saltus might have been MAN MONKEYS!!?!??

Heh. Only if they have tails. And the only way to know that is to use the ultimate arbiter of Wolfean factuality- cover art.

António Pedro Marques — 07 Jan 2011, 20:45 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote:
Jordon Flato:

But But But...does that mean the man apes of Saltus might have been MAN MONKEYS!!?!??

Heh. Only if they have tails. And the only way to know that is to use the ultimate arbiter of Wolfean factuality- cover art.

But what if they're secondarily tailed apes? Or tailless monkeys?

Or something descended from boulders with an ability to imitate men?

Or incarnate genies?