

Episode Sixty-Seven - Did The Gods Wake Up One Day To Create The Universe?

Post by “Joshua” of April 20, 2021 at 10:28 PM

In lieu of the ability to perform large-scale multi-generation experiments on these animals and their instincts, one thing we can do is study novel cases where nature herself (metaphorically, of course) laid out the experiment for us. In the case of birds, the classic example is to study isolated populations on remote islands. It's no accident that Darwin discovered the mechanisms of evolution after studying birds in the Galapagos.

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/05/e...me%20flightless>.

But possibly this only restates the same question; do island birds stop nesting in trees because they "forgot" the model, or do they start nesting on the ground because they "learned" a new model?

The central problem, as I see it, is that what we observe in individuals seems to argue for some kinds of uncanny innate 'knowledge'-but what we observe across populations seems to indicate the opposite.

And the further problem is that with individuals born in captivity and released into the wild, they don't survive long enough to furnish any useful data. The ideal experiment would be to take a large-ish population of beavers, raise them in captivity for successive generations where dam building is not possible, and then release them as a group into an environment where there are no other beavers to learn from except each other. Then wait for the dams.