

EYEING OFF CENTURIES-OLD SHARKS

In the 1950s, the testing of nuclear bombs created a ‘pulse’ of carbon-14 that we can test in living things. This has allowed scientists to determine that Greenland sharks (*Somniosus microcephalus*) are the world’s longest-lived vertebrates.

Researchers established that the shark has a very slow annual growth rate of about 1 cm ($\frac{1}{3}$ inch), which translates to a lifespan of around 400 years. Other known long-lived creatures include the chowder clam (500 years), bowhead whale (200) and Galápagos tortoise (170).

Bible skeptics scoff at the idea that humans such as Methuselah (969 years, Genesis 5:27) once lived for centuries and say that would be ‘biologically impossible’. Ignoring death by accident or disease, different living things seem to be genetically programmed to live for different average periods. Such ‘programmed longevity’ in animals can be drastically affected by breeding experiments.

For humans, it may be that the population bottleneck after Noah’s Flood (only eight people survived) contributed to the dramatic decline in post-Flood lifespans. There is also considerable evidence that the relentless accumulation of many mutations in each human generation also played a part, as renowned geneticist Dr John Sanford explains in his book *Genetic Entropy* (creation.com/s/10-3-513).

Pennisi, E., Greenland shark may live 400 years, smashing longevity record, sciencemag.org, August 2016.

Nielsen, J., *et al.*, Eye lens radiocarbon reveals centuries of longevity in the Greenland shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*), *Science* 353(6300):702–704, August 2016 | doi: 10.1126/science.aaf1703.

PILTDOWN MAN HOAX CONFIRMED—AGAIN



Science magazine reported on definitive proof that Charles Dawson—the man who ‘found’ the skull of Piltdown Man in Sussex, England, in 1912—perpetrated the hoax.

Dawson’s ‘find’ of humanlike skull fragments with a jaw and two apelike teeth was first exposed as a hoax in 1953 when it was shown that the skull was from a modern human and that the jawbone and teeth were from an orangutan. The teeth had been filed down to make them look human. The bones and teeth had been chemically treated and painted to make them look ancient.

More recently, a team studying the Piltdown skull applied modern scanning technology, DNA analysis and CT scans and concluded that Dawson was solely responsible for the fraud.

Isabelle De Groote, who was part of the team, said her sleuthing made her conclude, “no evidence should be taken for granted, and scientists must beware their preconceptions”. Her advice: “If something fits a hypothesis maybe too well, question it again,” she said.

Price, M., Study reveals culprit behind Piltdown Man, one of science’s most famous hoaxes, sciencemag.org, August 2016.

Webb, J., Piltdown review points decisive finger at forger Dawson, bbc.com, August 2016.

