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Lizards Evolving Placentas?

The Debate Between Dr. Jerry Bergman Versus Dr. Dan Stern Cardinale: Common Design or Common Descent?

By Jerry Bergman, PhD

In a debate with Dr. Dan Stern Cardinale entitled *Common Design or Common Descent?* streamed on January 18, 2025,¹ when asked to provide an experiment that supports macroevolution, Cardinale stated that

It's not an experiment, but it is a direct observation in nature; we have lizard populations that are right now in progress converting from laying eggs to giving live birth. That's macroevolution by anyone's standards. (1:44:35).

This bold claim was also made in the *National Geographic* as follows:

Evolutionary records show that nearly a hundred reptile lineages have independently made the transition from egg-laying to live birth in the past, and today about 20 percent of all living snakes and lizards give birth to live young only.²

I was unable to find any “evolutionary records” that showed a “hundred reptile lineages have independently made the transition from egg-laying to live birth.” What I found was a great deal of variety in reproduction. Some fish and reptiles use a mix of both birthing styles. The mother forms the eggs but retains them inside her body until the end stages of their embryonic development. At this time, the eggshells, due to the calcium absorbed from them—the shell is an important nutrient source—are so thin that embryos can breathe oxygen through them! When born, they are covered with only the thin-membrane remnant of their shell.

The other approach is that some lizards called skinks can conserve their bodies' nutrient resources by depositing eggs *outside* of their body for their final days of early development. In harsh mountain climates, skinks protect their young by keeping them inside their bodies until they are ready to survive in the outside world.³ Rather than providing evidence for evolution, this example illustrates a level of design that allows the animal to adapt to a variety of environments. Author Handwerk correctly observes that “the move from egg-laying to live birth in reptiles is fairly common...because it's relatively easy to make the switch.”² The reason it is easy to make the switch is because the egg system is very complex, so complex that the live birth method is only one more level of complexity on the twelve basic steps required for the egg-production reproduction method. The wide variety of animal birthing styles was described by Ste as follows:

Lizards reproduce in an amazing variety of ways. Some lay eggs (oviparity) and some bear live young (viviparity). Most species rely mostly on egg yolk for nutrition during embryonic development; a few have next to no yolk and rely completely on a placental connection to the mother. Some lizard placentas even compare with the complexity of mammalian placentas. Some species can vary the timing of birth. There are a rare few species that even have variety in their reproductive mode.⁴

This variety, when lined up by evolutionists, produces “populations that are in different stages of this process, [which] you can begin to put together *what looks like the transition from one [birth style] to the other*” (emphasis added).² Furthermore, by so doing, one could attempt to prove evolution from eggs to live birth or from live birth (viviparity) to the egg design (oviparity) birth. Or from live birth to the ability to, depending on conditions, employ either live birth or the egg approach, as used by three known lizard species. These three species have the built-in design to use either oviparity or viviparity. No evidence exists that they have evolved or are evolving from oviparity to viviparity.

It is possible that some lizard types had the capacity for *both* reproductive modes but lost one or the other type in history. Evolutionists don't generally consider this possibility because it is a process of information *loss*, which does not support microbes-to-microbiologists upward-trending model of evolution.

Summary

The variety of reproduction design proves not evolution but rather the intelligent design worldview. The existence of viviparity and oviparity in one type of animal actually creates problems for evolution, such as the problem of two different systems simultaneously evolving in the same animal. When one is functional there appears, in most cases at least, no reason for natural selection to select for the other competing reproductive system. Lastly, there was no evidence in the research reviewed above of lizards evolving placentas, but rather much evidence of not only intelligent design, but also overdesign, meaning the design is beyond what is normally required. An example is an elevator in a building that is rated as able to safely carry 10,000 pounds actually is designed to safely carry 20,000 pounds. This is called the safety factor and is a standard requirement to ensure its safety in extreme situations.

References

- ¹ Standing for the Truth Ministries (2025 Jan 18) DEBATE | Dr. Jerry Bergman vs. Dr. Dan Stern Cardinale — Common Design or Common Descent? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCR7PUGnrJg> Accessed 2025 Feb 07
- ² Handwerk B (2010 Jan 18) Evolution in action: Lizard moving from eggs to live birth. *Natl Geogr.* <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/100901-science-animals-evolution-australia-lizard-skink-live-birth-eggs> Accessed 2025 Feb 07
- ³ Stewart J, Mathieson AN, Eday TW, Herbert JF, Parker SL, Thompson MB (2010) Uterine and eggshell structure and histochemistry in a lizard with prolonged uterine egg retention (Lacertilia, Scincidae, Saiphos). *J Morphol.* 271(11):1342–1351 DOI: [10.1002/jmor.10877](https://doi.org/10.1002/jmor.10877) Accessed 2025 Feb 07
- ⁴ Doyl S (2010 Nov 18) Lizards moving from eggs to live birth: Evolution in action? <https://creation.com/lizard-eggs-live-birth> Accessed 2025 Feb 07