

Why Don't We Find Human & Dinosaur Fossils Together?

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Biblical creationists believe that man and dinosaurs lived at the same time because God, a perfect eyewitness to history, said that He created man and land animals on Day 6 (Genesis 1:24–31). Dinosaurs are land animals, so logically they were created on Day 6.

In contrast, those who do not believe the plain reading of Genesis, such as many non-Christians and compromised Christians, believe the rock and fossil layers on earth represent millions of years of earth history and that man and dinosaurs did not live at the same time.

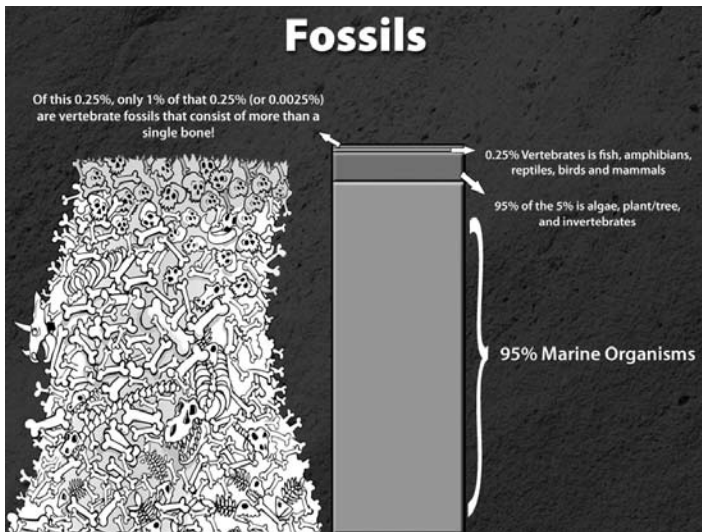
Old-earth proponents often argue that if man and dinosaurs lived at the same time, their fossils should be found in the same layers. Since no one has found definitive evidence of human remains in the same layers as dinosaurs (Cretaceous, Jurassic, and Triassic), they say that humans and dinosaurs are separated by millions of years of time and, therefore, didn't live together. So, old-earth proponents ask a very good question: Why don't we find human fossils with dinosaur fossils, if they lived at the same time?

We find human fossils in layers that most creationists consider post-Flood. Most of these were probably buried after the Flood and after the scattering of humans from Babel. So it is true that human and dinosaur fossils have yet to be found in the same layers, but does that mean that long-age believers are correct?

What Do We Find in the Fossil Record?

The first issue to consider is what we actually find in the fossil record.

- ~95% of all fossils are shallow marine organisms, such as corals and shellfish.
- ~95% of the remaining 5% are algae and plants.
- ~95% of the remaining 0.25% are invertebrates, including insects.
- The remaining 0.0125% are vertebrates, mostly fish. (95% of land vertebrates consist of less than one bone, and 95% of mammal fossils are from the Ice Age after the Flood.)¹



The number of dinosaur fossils is actually relatively small, compared to other types of creatures. Since the Flood was a marine catastrophe, we would expect marine fossils to be dominant in the fossil record. And that is the case.

Vertebrates are not as common as other types of life forms. This makes sense of these percentages and helps us understand why vertebrates, including dinosaurs, are so rare and even overwhelmed by marine organisms in the record.

¹ A. Snelling, Where are all the human fossils? *Creation* 14(1):28–33, December, 1991; J. Morris, *The Young Earth*, Master Books, Green Forest, Arkansas, 2002, 71.

Yet that still does not explain why there are no fossilized humans in Flood sediments.

Were Pre-Flood Humans Completely Obliterated?

In Genesis 6:7 and 7:23 God says He will “blot out” man from the face of the earth using the Flood. Some have suggested that this phrase means to completely obliterate all evidence of man. However, this is not completely accurate. After a lengthy study, Fouts and Wise make it clear that the Hebrew word *hxm* (*māhâ*), translated as “blot out” or “destroy,” can still leave evidence behind. They say,

Although *māhâ* is properly translated “blot out,” “wipe,” or even “destroy,” it is not to be understood to refer to the complete obliteration of something without evidence remaining. In every Biblical use of *māhâ* where it is possible to determine the fate of the blotted, wiped, or destroyed, the continued existence of something is terminated, but evidence may indeed remain of the previous existence and/or the blotting event itself. Even the theological consideration of the “blotting out” of sin suggests that evidence usually remains (e.g., consequences, scars, sin nature, etc.).²

In light of this, it is possible that human fossils from the Flood could still exist but just haven’t been found yet.

So, should we find human fossils in layers that contain dinosaur fossils? To answer this further, we need to understand what we actually find in the fossil record, what the likelihood is that humans would have been fossilized, what is unusual about their distribution, and how much Flood sediment there was.

Do Humans Fossilize like Other Creatures?

Fossilization is a rare event, especially of humans who are very mobile. Since the rains of Noah’s Flood took weeks to cover the earth, many people could have made it to boats, grabbed on to floating debris, and so on. Some may have made it to higher ground. Although they wouldn’t have lasted that long and would have eventually perished, they might not fossilize.

² D. Fouts and K. Wise, Blotting out and breaking up: miscellaneous Hebrew studies in geocatastrophism, Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Creationism, Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburgh, 1998, 219.

In most cases, dead things decompose or get eaten. They just disappear and nothing is left. The 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia was a shocking reminder of the speed with which water and other forces can eliminate all trace of bodies, even when we know where to look. According to the United Nation's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, nearly 43,000 tsunami victims were never found.³

Even if rare, it would still be possible to fossilize a human body. In fact, we do find fossils of humans, such as Neanderthals, in the post-Flood sediments. So why don't we find humans in pre-Flood sediments?

One suggestion has been that the human population was relatively small. Let's see how that possibility bears out.

Were Pre-Flood Humans Few in Number?

Estimates for the pre-Flood population are based on very little information, since Genesis 1 doesn't give extensive family size or population growth information. We know that Noah was in the tenth generation of his line, and he lived about 1,650 years after creation. Genesis also indicates that in Noah's lineage children were being born to fathers between the ages of 65 and more than 500 (when Noah bore his three sons).

How many generations were there in other lineages? We don't know. We know that those in the line from Adam to Noah were living upwards of 900 years each, but we can't be certain everyone lived that long. How many total children were born? Again, we don't know. What were the death rates? We simply don't know.

Despite this lack of information, estimates have ranged from a few hundred thousand to 17 billion people.⁴ These estimates are based on various population growth rates and numbers of generations. Recall that Noah was in the tenth generation from Adam, however, so these estimates may be too high.

It seems doubtful that there were many hundreds of millions of people before the Flood. If the world was indeed bad enough for God to judge with a Flood, then people were probably blatantly disobedient to God's command to be fruitful and fill the earth. Moreover, the Bible says that violence filled the earth, so death rates may have been extraordinarily high.

³ The Human Toll, www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/country/humantoll.asp.

⁴ T. Pickett, Population of the Pre-Flood World, www.ldolphin.org/pickett.html; H. Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970, 77-78; Morris, *The Young Earth*, 71.

In light of this, the population of humans in the pre-Flood world could have been as low as hundreds of thousands. Even if we make a generous assumption of 200 million people at the time of the Flood, there would be just over one human fossil per cubic mile of sediment laid down by the Flood!

Were Humans Concentrated in High Density Pockets that Have Not Been Discovered?

Today, humans tend to clump together in groups in towns, villages, and cities. In the same way, people were probably not evenly distributed before the Flood. The first city is recorded in Genesis 4:17, long before the Flood. We know that most of the population today lives within 100 miles (160 km) of the coastline. One report states, “Already nearly two-thirds of humanity—some 3.6 billion people—crowd along a coastline, or live within 150 kilometers of one.”⁵

This is strong evidence that the pre-Flood civilizations probably were not evenly distributed on the landmass. If man wasn’t evenly distributed, then the pockets of human habitation possibly were buried in places that have not yet been discovered.

Not only is fossilization a rare event, but fossils are also difficult to find. Just consider how much sediment was laid down by the Flood, compared to the area that has actually been exposed for us to explore.

John Woodmorappe’s studies indicate that there are about 168 million cubic miles (700 km³) of Flood sediment.⁶ John Morris estimates that there is about 350 million cubic miles of Flood sediment.⁷ The latter may be high because the total volume of water on the earth is estimated at about 332.5 million cubic miles, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.⁸ But even so, there is a lot of sediment left to sift through. Having such a massive amount of sediment to study is a major reason why we have not found human fossils yet.

So, a small human population and massive amounts of sediment are two prominent factors why we haven’t found human fossils in pre-Flood sediments. It also may simply be that we haven’t found the sediment where humans were living and were buried.

⁵ D. Hinrichsen, *Coasts in Crisis*, www.aaas.org/international/ehn/fisheries/hinrichs.htm.

⁶ J. Woodmorappe, *Studies in Flood Geology*, Institute for Creation Research, El Cajon, California, 1999, 59. This number actually comes from A.B. Ronov, *The earth’s sedimentary shell*, *International Geology Review* 24(11):1321–1339, 1982.

⁷ Morris, *The Young Earth*, 71.

⁸ Where is the earth’s water located? U.S. Geological Survey, ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/earthwherewater.html.

Think about It—Would You Want to Live with Dinosaurs?

Often, people believe that if human bones aren't found with dinosaur bones, then they didn't live at the same time. Actually, all we know for sure is that they weren't buried together. It is very easy for creatures to live at the same time on earth, but never even cross paths. Have you ever seen a tiger or a panda in the wild? Just because animals are not found together does not mean they do not live in the same world at the same time.

A great example is the coelacanth. Coelacanth fossils are found in marine deposits below dinosaurs and in other marine layers that date about the same age as dinosaurs.⁹ It was once thought the coelacanth became extinct about 70 million years ago because their fossils are not found in any deposits higher than this. However, in 1938 living populations were found in the Indian Ocean.¹⁰ It appears that coelacanths were buried with other sea creatures during the Flood—as we would expect. The example of the coelacanth shows that animals are not necessarily buried in the same place as other animals from different environments. We don't find human bones buried with coelacanths, either, but we live together today and people are enjoying them for dinner in some parts of the world.

Coelacanths aren't the only example. We find many examples like this, even with creatures that did not live in the sea. One popular example is the Wollemi Pine, which was fossilized in Jurassic deposits, supposedly 150 million years ago.¹¹ However, we find these trees living today. Another great living fossil is the Ginkgo tree, which supposedly thrived 240 million years ago, prior to the dinosaurs.¹² Yet, they are not found in layers with dinosaurs or post-Flood humans, even though they exist today. The list of “living fossils” goes on. Because animals and plants aren't buried together, it is no indication that things didn't live together.

In fact, based on human nature, we can assume that humans probably chose not to live in the same place with dinosaurs. So, the real issue is what happened to the local environment where humans lived.

⁹ L. Dicks, The creatures time forgot, *New Scientist*, **164**(2209): 36–39, October 23, 1999.

¹⁰ R. Driver, Sea monsters...more than a legend? *Creation* **19**(4):38–42, September 1997, www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v19/i4/seamonsters.asp.

¹¹ www.answersingenesis.org/docs2/4416livingfossil_tree12-25-2000.asp.

¹² www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/fish/other.html.

What Can We Conclude?

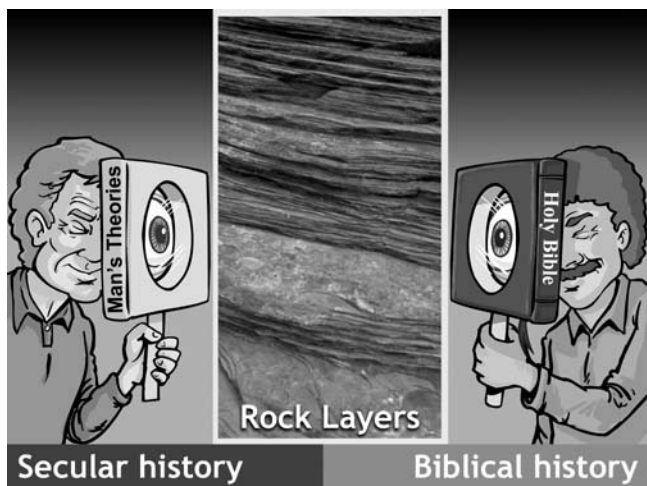
If human and dinosaur bones are ever found in the same layers, it would be a fascinating find to both creationists and evolutionists. Those who hold a biblical view of history wouldn't be surprised but would consider several logical possibilities, such as human parties invading dinosaur lands for sport or for food, or merely humans and dinosaurs being washed up and buried together.

Evolutionists, on the other hand, who believe the geologic layers represent millions of years of time, would have a real challenge. In the old-earth view, man isn't supposed to be the same age as dinosaurs. Yet we can be sure that this finding would not overturn their starting assumptions—they would simply try to develop a hypothesis consistent with their preconceived view of history. For example, they might search for the possibility that the fossils were moved and redeposited.

So, ultimately, the debate is not about the evidence itself—where we find human fossils and dinosaur fossils. Nobody was there to actually observe humans and dinosaurs living together. We are forced to reconstruct that history based on our existing assumptions about time and history, as well as our limited fossil evidence from the rocks.

As biblical creationists, we don't require that human and dinosaur fossils be found in the same layers. Whether they are found or not, does not affect the biblical view of history.

The fundamental debate is really about the most trustworthy source of information about history. Do we start with the Bible, which God says is true



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in every detail, including its history, or do we start with the changing theories of imperfect man? God tells Christians to walk by faith and that “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6). But this is not a blind faith. God has filled the world with clear evidences that confirm the truth of His Word and the certainty of the Christian faith. The fossil record itself is an incredible testimony to the truth of God’s Word and His promise to “blot out” all land dwelling, air-breathing animals and humans in a worldwide catastrophe.