

Creation Matters

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Jon Ahlquist: Ornithologist, Artist, and Creation Researcher

by Jean K. Lightner, DVM, MS

Born in 1944, Jon Ahlquist grew up in a Christian home in Ashtabula, Ohio. At the age of 7 he was given a Bible, which he proceeded to read through in its entirety. Jon began watching and painting birds at age 10. Due to some providential relationships, Jon was able to develop his skills. He had many opportunities to observe and learn more about birds with some knowledgeable birders. He also acquired the tools to develop his artistic talents. He had mentors that organized venues for his artwork to be sold. As demand increased, Jon was able to produce and sell many bird paintings. By the time he graduated from high school, he had accumulated a considerable savings, largely from selling his artwork.

Jon studied at Cornell, where he earned a B.S., and then Yale, where he earned his M.S. and Ph.D. He developed a long-term collaborative relationship with one of his instructors, Charles Sibley. Their research interest was systematics, or the relationships between birds as pertains to classifying them. Over the course of their research together, they compared proteins and DNA from a variety of birds to better understand their relationships. Their most important work came from their later DNA studies; they were even awarded the prestigious Elliot Medal from the National Academy of Sciences for their groundbreaking work.

Their research ruffled a few feathers, as some of their findings challenged the taxonomic views held at that time. Yet, in many other cases, it helped confirm the relationships that had been inferred from previous study of the birds. As a whole, it was a tremendous stride forward for avian taxonomy (classifying birds). Their work also has important implications for creation research, and I relied heavily on it when I wrote an article estimating the avian kinds that were on the Ark (Lightner, 2013).

From a career perspective Jon was doing well. However, on a personal level, Jon was not following the faith of his childhood. He still believed God existed, but he embraced evolution and a worldly lifestyle marked by drunkenness and profanity. God, in his providence, took Jon away from Yale, and humbled him with a teaching position that Jon found far less than desirable. There, God worked on Jon's heart. Through the witness of others, Jon discarded his belief in evolution and joined a Bible-believing church. More of this story can be found in an interview from a few years ago (Weiland, 2018).

Even when working within the evolutionary paradigm, Jon had realized several things. First, that speciation can be relatively rapid. Second, that their DNA work was finding clusters. Once Jon recognized



**Jon Edward Ahlquist
1944–2020**

that a phylogenetic tree does not “prove” that organisms are related, he easily embraced biblical creation. Then, he was able to reflect on the implications that his previous studies had for the creation model. The clusters, or groupings, he saw in the DNA data might correspond to created kinds. Jon re-examined the data and estimated about 200 kinds of birds were present on the Ark. Also, given that speciation can be relatively rapid, it is easy for creationists to account for the approximately 10,000 species of birds recognized today in the ~ 4,300 years since the Flood.

I first became personally acquainted with Jon when he sent me an email in May 2016. He had become aware of my paper on avian Ark kinds, and was excited that my estimate was quite close to his. He wanted to collaborate so we could strengthen the work I began. I invited him to a Creation Research Society Meet-

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Exploring Infinity

by Don DeYoung, PhD

In mathematics, an infinite series is an unending pattern of numbers added together. Some infinite sums converge to a finite value, while other series diverge without limit to infinity. We will look at four examples, each with a surprising total sum. First is the harmonic series, so named because its terms correspond to musical harmonics,

$$1 + 1/2 + 1/3 + 1/4 + 1/5 + \dots \rightarrow \infty$$

The total grows very slowly, reaching 2.9 after ten terms. About 10^{43} terms later the sum finally reaches 100. Although the terms rapidly decrease, the sum gradually tends toward infinity. In contrast, if certain terms are dropped from this series, it then converges to 2, even with an infinite number of remaining terms. This called the geometric series,

$$1 + 1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + \dots \rightarrow 2$$

The proof of this result and the other series sums in this article are found in a delightful book by Y.E.O. Adrian titled *The Pleasures of Pi, e* (2006).

Here are two additional infinite series with unexpected sums. The first uses the exclamation symbol ! called factorial, where, for example, $4! = 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 24$. Consider the exponential infinite series,

$$2 + 1/(2!) + 1/(3!) + 1/(4!) + \dots \rightarrow 2.718281\dots = e \text{ (exactly)}$$

When summed to infinity, the result of this series gives the base of the natural logarithm, e. This fundamental constant has wide application ranging from compound interest to radioactive decay.

Our fourth infinite series example is the Leibniz-Gregory equation. It has alternate + and - signs and converges to a surprising sum,

$$1 - 1/3 + 1/5 - 1/7 + 1/9 - \dots \rightarrow 0.785398\dots = \pi/4 \text{ (exactly)}$$

As the name of this last expression implies, infinite series have a rich history going back to early Greek times. Isaac Newton (1642–1727, in the “Old Style” calendar dates) was gifted with deep insight in mathematics, including infinite series. A classic Newton quote emphasizes his view that math is the underlying structure or language of creation, “God created everything by number, weight and measure.” Infinite series are intriguing mathematical patterns that reveal the beauty and patterns of the physical creation.

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and-Greet dinner held in Birmingham, AL in June 2016. Despite challenges due to his health, Jon drove the two hours to come; he even brought some of his artwork. It was an enjoyable time, as we got to know Jon better and appreciate his extensive knowledge from over 60 years of studying birds, as well as his colorful personality.

That was the only time I met Jon in person. However, we collaborated through email for four years. As we did so, it was evident that Jon never did things halfway when it came to studying birds. Since I work with Liberty University, I was able to track down numerous journal articles he otherwise would not have been able to access. However, there were times this was not enough. More than once he spent some of his meager funds to acquire a virtually unknown work to help answer a question on the species we were studying. He wanted our papers to be the very best possible. He once wrote me:

This sounds a bit like “pie-in-the-sky,” but ornithology and ornithologists have made a significant impact on many areas of biology—physiology of migration, communication (song), population biology, orientation (sun compass, polarized light, magnetism, celestial navigation, use of olfactory cues, *inter alia*), territoriality, neuron regeneration, behaviour (innate and cognitive mechanisms), biogeography, systematics, seed and pollen dispersal, endocrinology of breeding cycles, dynamics of flight, etc.—*so why not in the area of creation science as well?*

Our first paper together explored the founder effect (Lightner and Ahlquist, 2017). This effect occurs when a small group of organisms, sometimes only a pregnant female, become isolated and interbreed only among themselves. In his

fascinating raconteur style, Jon discussed what he had learned about it in college. This work is relevant to creation science because it offers a mechanism by which speciation can occur relatively rapid. As I went on to explore more recent work, I began to realize that it is somewhat parallel to what we have done in domestic species. A breeder will isolate a few individuals with the desired traits, and come up with a new breed or variety. This is how we have developed hundreds of dog breeds—with an astounding display of diversity—in only a few hundred years, not to mention a dizzying array of cultivars in plants. So, it is not just domesticated species—a similar phenomenon contributes to the development of diversity (and speciation) in the wild.

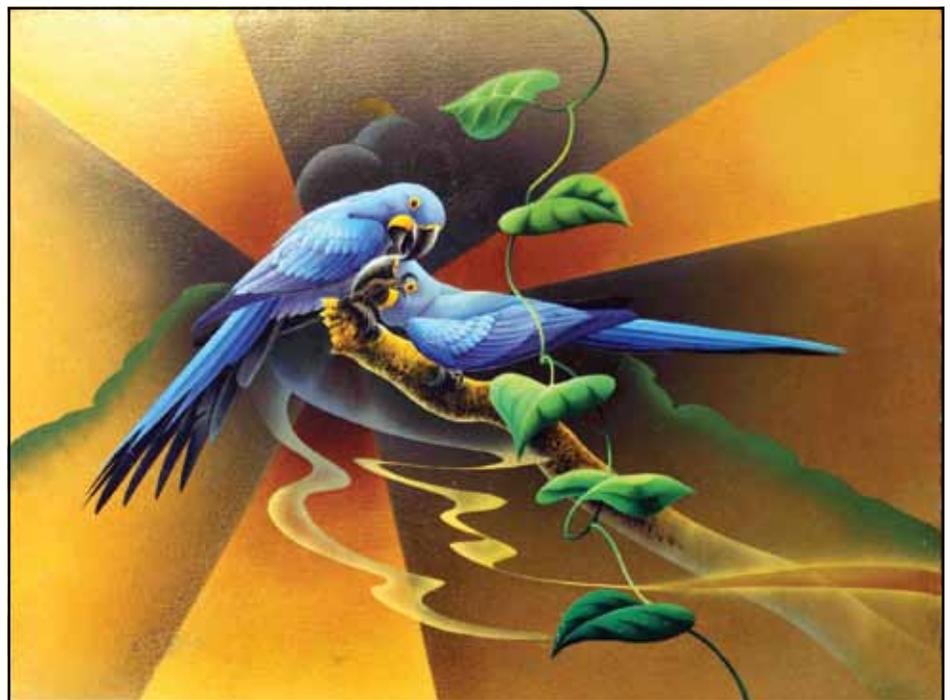
Jon had a fascination for the birds of Southeast Asia, as there is so much variety on the different islands in the region. In fact, the paradise kingfishers of this region inspired the early theoretical work related to the founder effect. So, for our second paper, we looked at the kingfisher family, focusing in particular on the par-

adise kingfishers (Ahlquist and Lightner, 2018). Jon made sure our article was well illustrated. He realized that there is much to learn about these birds and he felt creationists had much they could contribute to this knowledge. He outlined some of the research that needed to be done, and our paper ends with this challenge:

This is an opportune time for creation research to advance beyond its infancy and make valuable contributions to our understanding of the natural world. As we do so, we can address questions from a biblical perspective showing that the diversification and speciation we observed within created kinds is a result of a loving and wise Creator who designed his creatures to reproduce and fill the earth.

The next group, which we tackled in more detail, is the landfowl: chickens, turkeys, pheasant, grouse, quail, and other birds in the order Galliformes. Our initial focus was to confirm that we

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Jon sent me this photograph of his artwork in one of our hundreds of email exchanges.

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have good evidence that all these birds are related. Generally, if different species have bred together to produce offspring (known as hybrids), then we were confident they are related. There are hybrids between most of the families in this order. However, Jon noticed something that I had not; the hybrid data connecting cracids with the other hybridizing families were questionable. No one had ever looked at the hybrids genetically to confirm that they were truly hybrids.

Like a master detective, Jon got to work. He continued to search the literature. One promising lead seemed to end nowhere. Undaunted, he wrote to people he knew that had studied these birds, but they were unaware of any hybrids. He continued his search and, in the end, Jon's persistence was rewarded: he was successful in tracking down genetically

confirmed hybrids between a cracid and a chicken! The details and results of this quest appear in the first of our three-part series on landfowl (Ahlquist and Lightner, 2019).

Alas, to his gain and our loss, Jon passed out of this life at the end of April (Philippians 1:21). The final two landfowl papers are yet to be published. The second covers important topics such as evaluating diversity within this group so we can begin to understand how God designed these birds to change and adapt. The third includes Jon's initial attempt to trace the dispersion of landfowl globally after they left the Ark. While I expect both to get published, the third will not be accompanied by some of the illustrations Jon hoped to include, but had yet to complete.

Jon had desired to do so much more, but God has left that to someone else. The question now is, what young creationists are out there that are willing to devote years studying God's creation and

furthering our understanding of it from a biblical perspective? Are you one of them?

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Geology Matters

Working on a Global Flood Model

Michael J. Oard, MS and John K. Reed, PhD

Many creation scientists are working on The Flood Model. A model is a representation of a real event, object, or idea. If correct, it will explain all or most of the evidence. Models are necessary for natural history, since we cannot observe the past. In the *Flood Science Review*, a number of such models were presented and examined by both the model authors and a review panel of ten other creation scientists (Bardwell, 2011). The major takeaway from that review was

that all models need further development.

Why a comprehensive Flood model?

A comprehensive Flood model would provide a useful framework to organize geological observations—some of which appear contradictory on first appearance.

The secular scientists have their own framework—the geological timescale—within which sub-models, such as plate tectonics and evolution, are used to interpret their work. Given the vast difference between time and money invested, Flood models are far behind.

But we should not underestimate our advantages. First and foremost, we are anchored in truth, in the Bible. It provides pieces of our framework, as well as its foundation. It corresponds well to observed data, such as sedimentary strata and their fossils. Sedimentary rocks are commonly deposited over large areas, one type of sediment laid upon another with little or no erosion. For instance, uniformitarian scientists claim the horizontal layers in Grand Canyon, many

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Flood Model

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of which can be traced over 1,000 km, represent 250 million years of deposition. However, erosion on a million-year time-scale is rapid (Roth, 2009), which means that numerous valleys and canyons and other evidence of vast erosive power should be seen between those layers, but are lacking.

We also have a general sequence of events (Oard and Reed, 2017) from the Scripture. Using the Bible as our guide, we first need to establish a general Flood framework to explain the geology we observe. And then we need to fit many specific details into a comprehensive Flood model. Finally, we need to include some current enigmas that need further explanation, like the origins of “evaporites,” “reefs,” and “paleosols,” the order of the fossils, the origins of coal, oil, and many more.

The Scriptural mechanisms

Any model of the Flood must begin with the mechanisms described in Genesis 7:11b, 12 (ESV):

...on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heaven were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

The “fountains of the great deep” and the “windows of heaven” are vague enough to be open to various interpretations (Boyd and Snelling, 2014, p. 747), but together they resulted in 40 days and nights of rain, and a global flood that lasted about one year. The relatively clear term, the “great deep,” has been mostly interpreted as the oceans, but others believe it is the subterranean water of the hydrologic

1. Catastrophic plate tectonics
2. The hydroplate model
3. Meteorite impacts followed by differential vertical tectonics
4. Parts or some of all models can be combined into a new model
5. A totally new model with little, if any, aspects from the main three models

Table 1. The three main Flood models currently being developed, with the fourth and fifth representing other options.

system (Morris, 1976, pp. 194–197), sub-crustal reservoirs of supercritical water (Brown, 2008), or magma for volcanic eruptions.

Current models

Currently, many creationists will accept one of three mechanisms to explain the Flood. These are presented in Table 1 along with two other possibilities.

The most popular Flood model is Catastrophic Plate Tectonics (CPT) developed by Dr. John Baumgardner and his associates in the 1980s and 1990s. It is based on a computer model of the possible breakup of a supercontinent and the rapid subduction of oceanic crust into the mantle (Austin et al., 1994). Clarey (2020) recently added a different variant of the CPT model by combining it with stratigraphic data across multiple continents. It generally follows modern secular geological plate tectonics (PT) theory but with two major differences. The first is that it was a one-time event, not an ongoing process. Second, it accelerates that event to fit the Flood year.

CPT relies on the geophysical principle that when one rock is forced into another with great pressure, the non-moving rock will yield proportional to the pressure. It is this principle that Baumgardner

and colleagues relied on to develop their mechanism of “runaway subduction” and the resulting rapid plate motions (Baumgardner, 1994). During runaway subduction, oceanic plates plunge into the mantle at speeds measured at many meters per second. This caused a corresponding rise of mantle-derived magma where the crustal plates pull apart at the rift zones of the mid-ocean ridges, a continuous ridge 74,000 km long that runs through every ocean. It is this motion, along with other forces, that Baumgardner believes would have carried the plates over thousands of kilometers across the face of the planet. However, runaway subduction would require a powerful mechanism to initiate it, and that mechanism is still uncertain.

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Flood Model

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Dr. Walt Brown is an accomplished engineer and a retired instructor from the Air Force Academy who developed a model of the Flood in the 1980s, one that he has continued to refine ever since (Brown, 2008). He calls it the 'hydroplate model' (HPT) because it describes the events of the Flood based on a prior existence of vast reservoirs of water created 16 km deep under a granitic crust that once covered the whole Earth. The pressure in the reservoirs increased until the water burst through the surface from what are now the mid-ocean ridges. The water burst high in the sky to form the rain, and even spread into interplanetary space forming comets and asteroids that remain in the solar system. The escaping water caused the Flood. Some of the water came down in the Arctic as muddy hail to bury and freeze the woolly mammoths. The granite rose many kilometers high at mid-ocean ridges and slid horizontally on the cushion of water in the reservoirs. The plates eventually collided and came to a stop, abruptly causing mountains much higher than today. The reservoirs were underlain by a layer of basaltic lava rock. So, as the granite spread away from the mid-ocean ridges, the new ocean basins were flooded with this basalt. The mountains sank after the Flood ended, causing adjacent plateaus to rise. After a few hundred years, the southern Rockies had dropped about 50% of their height and pushed up the Colorado Plateau almost 2 km from near sea level. In another few hundred years, lakes east of the plateau burst through the plateau carving Grand Canyon in a dam-breach.

The impact/vertical tectonics (IVT) model is based on meteorite or comet impacts hitting early in the Flood (Oard, 2009) causing the surface rocks of the earth to be out of gravitational balance (Oard, 2011). This balance was restored

in the latter half of the Flood, resulting in differential vertical tectonics that drained the Floodwater (Oard, 2008; 2013). Differential vertical tectonics means that areas of the Earth's crust and upper mantle rose while other areas sank (Psalm 104:8), but without the lateral motion of CPT or HPT. So, there are two parts to the model: (1) impacts concentrated early in the Flood, tailing off late in the Flood, with a few after, and (2) differential vertical tectonics. The model is based on the fact that all the solid bodies of the solar system have numerous impacts, and the Earth should have, too. The devastation would be appropriately placed in the Flood.

The future looks bright

Maintaining different models and concepts at this stage of Flood geology is a good thing. The principle of multiple working hypotheses (Oard and Reed, 2019) allows comparative evaluation of new data and existing models. We may discover that options 4 or 5 in Table 1 will turn out to be true.

So, we continue to build knowledge and gather data, hopefully with an open mind, waiting for the breakthroughs that will lead us toward the correct Flood model. Meanwhile, it is good to have more than one. It is worth remembering that because one current model is more developed or more popular than another, it is not necessarily right (Reed and Oard, 2010). This especially applies to the so-called historical sciences. As work multiplies, we hope to see such a model unfold, helping creation science stand for what is true.

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Summaries of Cutting-edge Research from *Creation Research Society Quarterly*

Summaries compiled by Jean K. Lightner, DVM, MS

Creation research that engages the current scientific literature and builds the creation model is crucial; CRS exists to support and publish such research. Only through high-quality research can we equip others with strong, sound apologetic arguments that demonstrate the robustness of the creation model over that of evolution.

Layers of Flood Sediment

Despite decades of debate, there is still no consensus within the creation community as to the location of the Flood/post-Flood boundary. The two most commonly proposed locations in the rock record are 1) the Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg) boundary and 2) somewhere in the upper Cenozoic. One of the arguments

for the first location was that the K-Pg marks the end of global marine sediments. However, creation geologist Dr. Tim Clarey (2017) has published articles examining stratigraphic data, including data from oil well drilling across multiple continents, to demonstrate that expansive marine deposits have been identified above the Cretaceous, extending well into the Cenozoic.

In the Fall 2019 issue of the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* (CRSQ), Clarey and Werner (2019) published a follow-up study that looks specifically at the region in and surrounding Turkey. This includes the general area where the Ark is believed to have landed, and recolonization of the earth after the Flood began. Consistent with their findings at other locations, they discovered uninterrupted marine sediments across this survey area, which included parts of Europe and the Middle East. They point out that humans could not have repopulated the earth while such largescale marine deposition (limestone and salt) was occurring. They postulate a Flood/post-Flood boundary near the top of the Cenozoic, close to the Neogene-Quaternary (N-Q) boundary.

Clarey, T.L. 2017. Local catastrophes or receding floodwater? Global geologic data that refute a K-Pg (K-T) Flood/post-Flood boundary. *CRSQ* 52:100–120.

Clarey, T.L. and D.J. Werner. 2019. Compelling evidence for an upper Cenozoic Flood/post-Flood boundary: Paleogene and Neogene marine sediment completely surround Turkey. *CRSQ* 56:68–75.

Birds and Baramins

The Bible relates that God created plants and animals “according to their kinds.” The field of baraminology (from the Hebrew *bara* - create, and *min* - kind), or the study of created kinds, is based on this historical reality. Many creation researchers have provided estimates of which plants or animals alive today are truly related because they belong to the same baramin (created kind). Yet the work in this field has only just begun. There is a great need to further investigate these putative baramins to confirm the initial estimates and gain a deeper understanding of how creatures were designed to change and adapt.

In the Fall 2019 issue of the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* (CRSQ), Drs. Jon Ahlquist and Jean K. Lightner take a closer look at landfowl (order Galliformes, or chicken-like birds). In this first of a three-part series, the authors explore previous work on these species, and add to evidence that these birds are truly related. In the process, they highlight strategies that are helpful in uncovering multiples lines of evidence to support conclusions, laying a foundation for other researchers who would like to join this field of research.

Ahlquist, J. and J. K. Lightner. 2019. Strategies for more clearly delineating, characterizing, and inferring the natural history of baramins I: Establishing baraminic status, with application to the order Galliformes (Class: Aves). *CRSQ* 56:97–104.

*How countless are
Your works, LORD!
In wisdom You have
made them all;
the earth is full of Your creatures.
Psalm 104:24 (CSB)*

Continued creation research is made possible by the generous gifts (time, money and prayer) of our many supporters. Thanks to all who have contributed!

Please note:

Unfortunately, the CRS Conference that had been scheduled for this August has been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, we look forward to hosting our conference again next year. Please watch for more details later.

Creation Matters

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Prayer Matters

Praise: We thank God for each one of you who contributes through prayer, finances, and service as we seek to glorify God through understanding His Creation.

Prayer: In the past year, Creation Matters has carried articles paying tribute to three men who made profound contributions to the creation movement. They are no longer with us, and we need younger researchers to rise to fill their places. The Creation Research Society (CRS) has planned some bold moves to encourage this. Please pray that God would raise up more creation researchers, and give the CRS Board wisdom as we fill our role in encouraging this.

Thanks Again!

CRS is moving!

The Creation Research Society is moving our operation center and research laboratories to the campus of Arizona Christian University, Glendale, AZ. The new facility will provide the Society with:

- High-profile location and increased visibility for the Society
- Modern research laboratory
- Easily accessible walk-in bookstore
- Modern office space
- Increased laboratory space

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