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Hair and evolution 毛发和进化论

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Vocabulary: Evolution 词汇: 进化

Compared to other large mammals on Earth, we humans have relatively little hair. This obvious fact is not so strange until we look at our closest living relatives in the animal kingdom – chimpanzees and other great apes. Why, might we ask, have we evolved to be almost hairless when all other **primates** are still covered in fur? In fact, **bizarre** as it may seem, our lack of hair has been the key to our evolutionary success as a **species**.



The question why our earliest ancestors lost their hair when fur would have been beneficial to them – for keeping warm on cold nights, for example – was **pondered** by Charles Darwin, the famous **evolutionist**: "No one supposes that the **nakedness** of the skin is any direct advantage to man." He concluded that the reason **hominins** lost their hair was **sexual selection**. In other words, we prefer our partners to have little hair. But what caused our **ancestors** to start losing their hair before this preference set in?

The most likely **hypothesis** to explain the loss of hair is that it became necessary when early **hominids** moved to a more open **savannah** habitat around 2 to 3 million years ago, when they started to **hunt** big **game**. Hunting in open savannah meant being exposed to the strong heat of the sun for several hours in the day and being in danger of overheating. Being covered in hair prevented our ancestors from losing heat fast enough. So, as Peter Wheeler, of Liverpool John Moores University in the UK, explained, losing hair allowed them to develop the ability to sweat and therefore to cool down. **Early humans** could, as a consequence, be out at midday hunting and **foraging**. "It would be [an] enormous advantage to be able to spend the entire midday foraging, **finding mates** or fighting enemies", Tamás Dávid-Barrett of Oxford University says. "Sweating allows that, and for sweat to be efficient you need to be mostly hairless". The meat from hunting animals gave early humans the energy to fuel their growing brain.

Humans are the sweatiest primates on Earth. They have up to 5 million sweat **glands**, which produce about 12 litres of sweat per day. It's this **propensity** to sweat that accounts for our hairlessness and has allowed us to **thrive**. It might help to remember this next time you're surrounded by sweaty hairless **torsos** in the gym!

词汇表

primates	灵长目动物
bizarre	奇怪的，离奇的
species	(动植物的) 物种
to ponder	思索，考虑
evolutionist	进化论者
nakedness	裸露
hominins	古人类
sexual selection	雌雄淘汰
ancestor	祖先
hypothesis	假说，假设
hominids	原人
savannah	稀树草原
to hunt	打猎
game	野禽
early human	早期人类
foraging	觅食，搜寻食物
find a mate	寻找配偶
gland	腺
propensity	习性，倾向
to thrive	长得健壮
torso	(人体的) 躯干

测验与练习

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. True or false? *All primates are covered in fur.*
2. Who was Charles Darwin?
3. Why was moving to the savannah a problem for our early ancestors?
4. What is the advantage of having little hair in a hot climate?
5. What link does the author make between hunting meat and human success?

2. 请你在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. I discovered the other day that I have a _____ relative living in Greenland. She's actually my first cousin.

direct	close	good	near
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2. Darwin explained his famous _____ theory of natural selection in 1859 in his book 'On the Origin of Species'.

revolutionary	evolutionary	evolution	extraordinary
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3. If babies wear too many clothes in hot weather, they are at _____ of overheating.

risk	danger	likely	possibility
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4. Daniel _____ hard work. He's happiest when he's got lots of problems to solve at the office.

thrives at	thrives on	thrives with	thrive on
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5. Our human ancestors lost hair because this allowed them to sweat with the greatest _____.

effort	deficiency	efficiency	sufficiency
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答案

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. True or false? All primates are covered in fur.

False. Humans only have a little hair on their bodies compared to other primates.

2. Who was Charles Darwin?

He was a famous evolutionist.

3. Why was moving to the savannah a problem for our early ancestors?

Because it meant that they were exposed to long hours of strong sun and they were in danger of overheating.

4. What is the advantage of having little hair in a hot climate?

It means that you can sweat efficiently.

5. What link does the author make between hunting meat and human success?

The author explains that eating meat provided energy that helped the brain to develop.

2. 请你在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. I discovered the other day that I have a **close** relative living in Greenland. She's actually my first cousin.

2. Darwin explained his famous **evolutionary** theory of natural selection in 1859 in his book 'On the Origin of Species'.

3. If babies wear too many clothes in hot weather, they are at **risk** of overheating.

4. Daniel **thrives on** hard work.

5. Our human ancestors lost hair because this allowed them to sweat with the greatest **efficiency**.