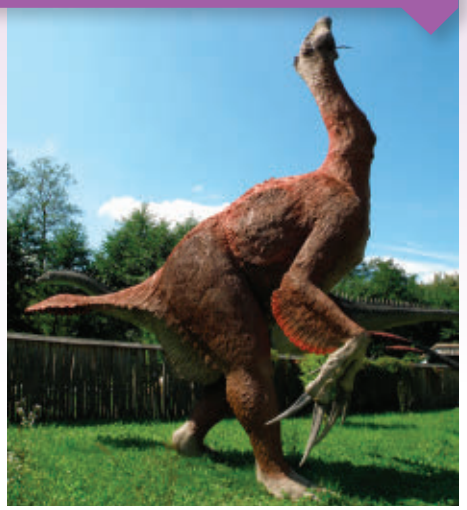
RETHINKING THE 'SCISSORHANDS' DINO



Therizinosaurus is a strange theropod dinosaur famous for the massive, long claws on its forelimbs. They were once thought to be for cutting prey before it was realized that therizinosaurs (like most theropods, the group that includes *T. rex*) ate plants (see creation.com/veg-dinos). Then they were thought to be used in self-defence and/or to help remove vegetation from trees.

Now, new research shows the claws were too fragile for either task. Scientists struggling to think of a new function have since suggested that the claws were to attract mates in courtship rituals; to make loud clanging noises to scare off predators; or, to comb and clean its *feathers*—without any evidence it had these!

This highlights the limitations faced in historical science; when we can't watch it using those claws, much guesswork comes into play. This is a good reason to be wary of accepting claims about fossil creatures uncritically.

Pare, S., Jurassic World's bizarre, scythe-clawed dinosaur couldn't have been a slasher, study confirms, livescience.com, 2 Mar 2023.

WHALE SHARK VISION MORE COMPLEX THAN THOUGHT

New research on the world's largest living fish, the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), reveals that its vision has an amazing light sensitivity. Scientists from the University of Queensland used *electroretinography*, a technique that measures the electrical responses of the eyes to different light wavelengths.

The researchers found that the photoreceptor cells in whale sharks' eyes were most sensitive to blue-green light. They suggest that this would help the sharks detect bioluminescence from their tiny prey, which is often blue-green. This would also explain why they dive so deep (2 km, 1.24 mile).

This specialized colour sensitivity is presumably due to a mutation in the gene for the light-sensitive protein *rhodopsin* (RHO). It causes the maximum absorption wavelength to 'blue-shift' from ~500 nm (green) to 478 nm (blue-green).

However, the mutation makes RHO less stable. In humans, this would cause congenital stationary night blindness (CSNB). But the whale shark lives in deep cold-water environments that preserve this mutated RHO.

This is one of many examples of an *information-losing mutation* that is *beneficial*. That is, it helps its possessor, so would be favoured by natural selection (see 'Corruption of the code', p. 53). But such 'downhill' mutations are of no help in explaining evolution, which needs new structures and functions.

Yamaguchi, K., *et al*, Whale shark rhodopsin adapted to deep-sea lifestyle by a substitution associated with human disease, *PNAS* **120**(13):e2220728120, 21 Mar, 2023.

SCHOOLS GENDER INDOCTRINATION IN UK

London think tank Civitas reported on a survey of 1,000 16–18-year-olds and parents of 12–16-year-olds. About 10% of the teenagers wanted to (or had) change(d) their gender. 67% were taught at school that biological sex is "assigned at birth", suggesting some sort of arbitrary social convention, whereas of course it is based on observed anatomical (reflecting genetic) reality.

No doubt due to that sort of 'teaching', 77% of the parents surveyed wanted "unrestricted legal right to see all" materials and lesson plans. Surprisingly, though, 1 in 7 (14%) not only didn't care, but actually opposed the idea of parents having that right.

Christian MP Miriam Cates said, "No child is or can be 'born in the wrong body' so when one in ten teenagers says that they have or want to 'change gender' we know that something is going very wrong." Indeed, people have forgotten their Creator who created people "male and female" at the beginning (Genesis 1:27).

Civitas: One in ten teenage pupils want to 'change gender', christian.org.uk, 19 May 2023.