

Bomby: Thoughts of a Forensic Entomologist

by Mark Benecke, Ph.D.

International Forensic Consulting, Cologne, Germany

A review of Bomby The Bombardier Beetle, written by Hazel Mae Rue, illustrated by Sandy Morton, published by the Institute for Creation Research, El Cajon, California, 1984, ISBN 0-932766-13-7, 40 pages.

As a person involuntarily dealing with the borders of human behavior, I am used to all sorts of statements that at first seem weird, but which become reasonable after you have had a chance to digest them. I am a forensic entomologist. In my line of work, I have gotten to know, and to understand people of every possible skin color, sexual preference, and mother tongue, people who mutilate themselves for the purpose of self-expression, serial killers, cops, drug users, not to mention computer nerds (like my brother), and oddballish scientists (like myself).

Unfathomable Biologists

One particular type of person, however, I still do not understand: biologists who are convinced that something other than evolutionary forces might have created the diversity of species on earth.

The most startling example was a guest scientist in our lab who clearly stated that she believes in some higher power, and that therefore (!) something higher than we can understand must explain everything that happens on earth. The point is not that there may or may not be some higher force beyond what is happening on earth and in the depth of space. But speaking from a scientific, and a criminalistic point of view, I do not see why one would deviate in everyday life from a strictly evidence-based approach just for the purpose of assuming that something somewhere out there is, well, somewhere out there.

Enter the Bombardier Beetle

For many years now, the example of the bombardier beetle has been well-known in local German communities that wish to prove the presence of mysterious "creation" forces. Jehovah's Witnesses, especially, approach me once in a while on this matter. As scientists, my colleagues and I sometimes take the opportunity to have a discussion with them. One of the most interesting sentences that we were told during a conversation was "We do not want to convince you -- we want you to believe." To me, this seems to be the essence of what the *Bomby* book tries to do in a very naive way -- not to convince you, but rather to insist that you believe in "creation."

Of course, creationists would turn this argumentation around and claim that anybody who trusts evolution would have to believe in a lot himself, especially in all the missing fossil proofs of adaptive radiation. However, as my co-referees in this series of *Bomby* book reviews explain, from a rational point of view, modern evolutionary theories are still the best possible explanation for biological processes of all kind. They will remain the best explanation unless and until someone comes up with a better theory.

Why I Like the Bomby

Personally, I must say I like the *Bomby* book, because it takes kids (and insects) seriously. Also, it has a funny (to me, anyway) dialogue on the extinction of dragons, and a glossary that treats the word "friends" as a term that needs explanation (the glossary defines it, using a unique grammar of some sort, as: "person who knows and like another").

Those little, obviously nonsensical details might make the book a good start for a discussion on evolution, even with smaller kids. For example, I would ask my child if he or she believes in dragons -- and why, or why not. Then, I would ask whether he or she believes in the creation of animals -- and again why, or why not. I am sure that most children have a gut feeling that any creator might have had a very hard time in figuring out all the details that one can observe in nature. Some other kids might just not care at all.

Fear?

No one should be afraid of the *Bomby* book as long as the AIR Teachers' Guide (see page 17) is around. The Teachers' Guide makes people ask: "Can you think of even one different explanation that works as well or better?" That is what I believe in: children can always come up with good ideas -- with or without a little help from their friends.

Written by Hazel May Rue
Illustrated by Sandy Thornton