A Seal of Approval

We noticed previously how instinct, working in animals, operates under the **precise control of coordinated complexes of nerve cells**. The precision of such activity, not being under the conscious control of the animal, points back to a Designer. Consider, for example, a group of more than thirty kinds of animals in the seal family, which demonstrate some remarkable features of design.

- The writer, while visiting a relative who lives on Northwest Bay on Vancouver Island, was introduced to a member of this group, called the **sea lion**. A herd of sea lions was feeding on a shoal of herring offshore, and by their calls showed why they were called lions.

Although a good mile away, their roars were loud enough to interrupt one's sleep. We were informed that the sea lions got their sleep at various times in any 24 hour period, but **never all at one time**. There were always some awake and **alert for predators**, which include orcas.

- During spring school break we would sometimes take our children for a drive along the coastal highway and enjoy stopping at the Oregon caves to see the **Steller sea lion rookery**. The surface of the cave, occupied by groups of females, began at sea level and sloped upwards towards the rear where a male, about twice the size of the others, would issue an occasional roar.

At the edge there were females travelling to and from the sea which at that time had about a six-foot swell. We noticed one seal coming in with a pup at her side, waiting for the top of the swell and hopping onto the edge of the cave. But each time, the pup **didn't quite make it**, so mother slipped back in. Finally, when she was ready to jump, she swept her flipper behind Junior, giving him an **upwards swat**, and they both landed on the ledge of the cave.

- There are two major families of seals, the **earless** and the **eared** seals. Earless seals, e.g., elephant seal, harbour seal, leopard seal, and Weddell seal, have no external ears. They swim by moving their **back flippers** from side to side, while using their front flippers for steering. To move on land they wriggle on their bellies and pull themselves forward with their front flippers.

Eared seals, such as sea lions, have external ears. They have longer flippers than earless seals, and mostly use their **front flippers for swimming**. The eared seals, unlike the earless seals, are able to move their hind flippers forward, which enable them to use all four limbs when moving on land.

- **The middle ear** of both groups has an unusual feature. Each contains sinuses or cavities that are believed to fill with blood during dives, thus **protecting the ear from pressure damage**. Did the first seals keep going deaf after deep diving, until an extremely unlikely genetic mutation occurred? Or, more likely, was the feature included by the Designer who had already **foreseen the need** and provided for it?

Such foresight can be seen in the **general design** of the seal. Having a core temperature of 37○, about the same as human's, the seal has been designed with a **thick layer of blubber** for insulation against the cold ocean. Depending on the uncertain results of searching and capturing food, there is also a need for a built-in food reserve, which is also found in the blubber. The density of blubber is about 9/10th of water and therefore also gives the seal increased buoyancy.

- And there are more and remarkable design features to see in the seal, next time, God willing.