

GNASH-IONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Darwin
in reverse



DAVID BENATAR observes South African drivers in their natural habitat.

A Gnash-ional Geographic Special with David Attenborough Benatar

Australoraedarius africanus

In this month's feature we examine a hominid throwback: the South African driver (*Australoraedarius africanus*). This is no endangered species. It can be found in rapidly increasing numbers in its natural habitat – the tarred pathways and highways of South Africa.

This fleet-wheeled and aggressive creature has the mental capacity of a retarded chimp, but is not nearly as endearing. While not remotely clever enough to have invented the wheel, it regularly abuses this revolutionary device, spinning it at dangerous speeds and weaving it between other chassis-subtending, primate-bearing wheels. It yields high “RPM”, Revolutions Per Moron.

Australoraedarius poses a challenge to scientists. While it can sometimes be found outside its metallic encasing, at which stage it is termed a “jerk”, it is much more commonly a devolutionary stage of *Homo sapiens*. The latter, (relatively!) more sophisticated hominid metamorphoses into the degenerate *Australoraedarius* as it withdraws into its vehicular shell. Scientists speculate that the anonymity of its casing and the perceived invincibility of its armoured crust have a toxic effect on the moral and prudential capacities of the self-congratulatory *Homo sapiens*.

COMMUNICATION

Australoraedarius is a poor communicator. While it is equipped with bionic indicator lights to convey directional intentions to other *Australoraedarius*s, these are almost never used. The most common instruments of communication are, aurally, the hooter and, visually, the middle finger.

Freudians who have studied the *Australoraedarius* believe that these two communicative expressions are semantically equivalent. Both expressions mean, in scientific language, “I assert my dominance over you by threatening sexual penetration” or, more colloquially – “F**k you!” Scientists are at a loss to understand how this primitive gesturing actually demonstrates the superiority of the gesticulator.

While *Australoraedarius* has limited expressive capacity, it has a somewhat greater aptitude for comprehending the signs and symbols of its environment. For the benefit of our readers, I offer some key signs and how they are interpreted by *Australoraedarius*:



“Don't let us stop you. We know you aren't driving an ambulance, but you're so very special. Everybody else should watch out for you. Proceed at whim.”



“Beware of traffic coming from the left and the right.”



No known meaning. Some scholars suggest that this is *Australoraedarian* artwork, but others maintain that it is so widely ignored that it must be some kind of *Australoraedarian* maternal nag.



“Don't let the safety of others interfere with your inane telephone conversation.”



“Hunting grounds ahead. Increase speed.”

BREEDS

There are many breeds of *Australoraedarius africanus*. Among the more aggressive is the *Australoraedarius africanitaxis*. This breed emits incessant mating calls – a combination of short hoots from the hooter¹ and vocal shouts such as “Rondebos!”, “Claremont!”, “Cape Town!”. The vehicles of this breed are mounted and dismounted by hundreds of mates – known as “passengers” – per day.

Another increasingly common breed is the *Australoraedarius africanisUV*, an indigenous version of the much more common North American variety. This breed comes in many colours, but none of them are “green”. It is widely believed that this breed is genitally challenged, although it has proved difficult to conduct the fieldwork that would be necessary to confirm or disconfirm this. Researchers attempting this project have been badly beaten and some have been run over.

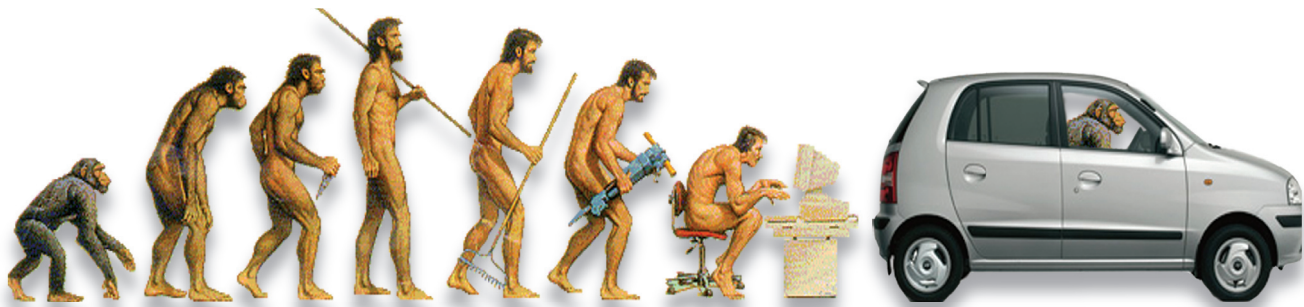
EVOLUTIONARY FITNESS

Australoraedarius africanus is highly adaptive. It espouses the doctrine of “the survival of the fastest”. Only a very small proportion thereby remove themselves from the gene pool. Usually, other individuals are the victims of their speed and recklessness. They have no significant predators. The one nominal predator, a breed commonly referred to as “traffic cops” is an endangered, almost toothless breed that sleeps for about 20 hours a day. Occasionally it emerges from hibernation and sets a “trap”, but it does so in predictable places. The cunning *Australoraedarius* has learned to approach within meters

of the trap, suddenly slow down and then speed off, thereby avoiding being caught.

Thus the *Australoraedarius* seems set to continue thriving, as long as the law of the jungle continues to prevail on South African roads. The rise of an effective predator could make some of the *Australoraedarian* attributes less adaptive, but this seems less likely with the recent extinction of the country’s single greatest predator of impunity, the Scorpion.

¹ For the benefit of our American readers – the country not the Cape Flats gang – the hooter is a car’s “horn” and not what you were thinking



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