

Britons Mark Bicentennial Of Revolutionary Scientist

Darwin is celebrated with commemorations, speeches, parties and a zoo promotion.

The Associated Press

LONDON — They threw him a party at the Natural History Museum, they trotted out a set of stamps in his honor, and a zoo offered free admission to anyone sporting a beard in recognition of his famous facial hair.

Although more than 600 events took place worldwide Thursday to commemorate Darwin Day, the 200th anniversary of scientist Charles Darwin's birth, it was a particularly special occasion in his native land.

Darwin enjoys a pride of place in Britain, where his face adorns the 10-pound note. In a message to Parliament, British Culture Secretary Andy Burnham called the scientist "one



Darwin

of the most influential Britons of all time."

The British are celebrating his birthday with commemorations, lectures and a good dose of homegrown reverence.

"We had beards of all different colors, shapes and sizes," zoo spokeswoman Lucy Parkinson said.

Amid all the celebration, a note of skepticism: A poll compiled by ComRes shows up to 43 percent of Britons believe God created the world within the past 10,000 years; even more think intelligent design, the idea that evolution alone is not enough to explain the origin of life, is or might be true.

The poll of 2,060 adults was taken in October. A margin of error was not given.

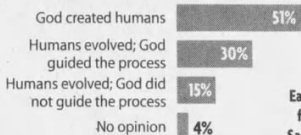
CHARLES DARWIN 200 YEARS

Charles Robert Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection is the unifying theory of the life sciences.

Evolution theory key facts

- Development of life from nonlife: Complex creatures evolve from more simplistic ancestors naturally over time
- All life is related and has descended from a common ancestor
- Humans developed from primates (ape-like ancestors)
- Natural selection: Preservation of a functional advantage that enables a species to compete better in the wild

U.S. poll reveals that majority rejects evolution theory



CBS poll of 808 adults, Oct. 3-5, 2005, margin of error +/- 4 percentage points

Life milestones

- Born Feb. 12, 1809, in Shrewsbury, England
- 1825, Graduates from University of Edinburgh
- 1828, Christ's College, University of Cambridge
- 1831-1836, "Beagle" voyage, gathers scientific material worldwide
- 1839, Marries Emma Wedgwood
- 1859, "On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection" is published in London.
- 1871, "The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex" published.
- 1882, Dies April 19, age 73

Earliest human fossil found: *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*

