

Amphibians

Let us turn from mammals to amphibians. Darwinists believe that the first amphibians (the *labyrinthodonts*, la-buh-RIN-thuh-dontz) evolved from early fish known as *crossopterygians* (KRAW-SAHP-tuh-RIJ-nz) or lobe-finned fish. A very similar lobe-finned fish swims the Indian Ocean today. Look at the comparison of the oldest known amphibian skeleton, *Ichthyostega* (IK-the-o-STAY-ga), with a crossopterygian fish shown in Figure 4-8.

If crossopterygians really did evolve into amphibians, tremendous changes must have taken place. Fins must have been transformed into forelimbs (see Figure 4-8). The skull had to change from two parts to a single, solid piece. The hip bones had to enlarge and become attached to the backbone. Numerous changes must also have occurred in organs, muscles and other soft tissues. For example, the air bladder of the fish had to be transformed into the lungs of the amphibian.

Though just a few of the many examples possible, these are enough to show how large the differences between early fish and amphibians really were. How many different transitional species were required to bridge the gap between them; hundreds? Even thousands? We don't know, but we do know that no such transitional species have been recovered. Moreover, we have no fossil evidence of the evolution of the crossopterygians from other fish. Two large gaps thus exist in the fossil record between ordinary Devonian fish (325 million years ago) and amphibians; one between ordinary fish and crossopterygians, and an even larger gap between these lobe-finned fish and amphibians.

Archaeopteryx

It is interesting that nearly every organism possesses the defining characteristics of its taxon. In fact, only a handful of transitional forms have been proposed.