



# Scientists Unveil Missing Link In Evolution

7:16pm UK, Wednesday May 20, 2009

Alex Watts, Sky News Online

**Scientists have unveiled a 47-million-year-old fossilised skeleton of monkey hailed as the missing link in human evolution.**



PICTURES: THE LINK / ATLANTIC PRODUCTIONS

The 95%-complete 'lemur monkey' is described as the "eighth wonder of the world"

The search for a direct connection between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom has taken 200 years - but it was presented to the world today at a special news conference in New York.

The **discovery of the 95%-complete 'lemur monkey'** - dubbed *Ida* - is described by experts as the "eighth wonder of the world".

They say its impact on the world of palaeontology will be "somewhat like an asteroid falling down to Earth".

Researchers say proof of this transitional species finally confirms **Charles Darwin's theory of evolution**, and the then radical, outlandish ideas he came up with during his time aboard the *Beagle*.

Sir David Attenborough said **Darwin** "would have been thrilled" to have seen the fossil - and says it tells us who we are and **here we came from**.

## Pictures From Atlantic Productions



"This little creature is going to show us our connection with the rest of the mammals," he said.

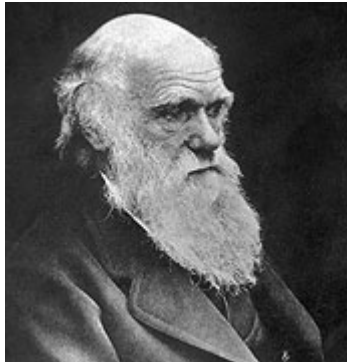
his is the one that connects us directly with them.

ow people can say 'okay we are primates, show us the link'.

he link they would have said up to now is missing - well it's no longer missing."

team of the world's leading fossil experts, led by Professor Jorn Hurum, of Norway's National History Museum, have been **cretly researching** the 1ft 9in-tall young female monkey for the past two years.

nd now it has been transported to New York under high security and unveiled to the world during the **bicentenary of arwin's birth**.



arwin caused storm with his theory

Later this month, it will be exhibited for one day only at the Natural History Museum in London before being returned to Oslo.

Scientists say *Ida* - squashed to the thickness of a beer mat by the immense passage of time is the most complete primate fossil ever found.

With her human-like nails instead of claws, and opposable big toes, she is placed at the very root of human evolution when early primates first developed features that would eventually develop into our own.

Another important discovery is the shape of the talus bone in her foot, which humans still have in their feet millions of lifetimes later.

*Ida* was unearthed by an amateur fossil-hunter some 25 years ago in Messel pit, an ancient crater lake near Frankfurt, Germany, famous for its fossils.

is fossil is really a part of our history; this is part of our evolution, deep, deep back into the aeons of time, 47 million years o.

### *fossil expert Professor Jorn Hurum*

he was cleaned and set in polyester resin - and incredibly, was hung on a mystery German collector's wall for 20 years.

ky News sources say the owner had no idea of the **unique fossil's significance** and simply admired it like a cherished Van ogh or Picasso painting.

ut in 2006, *Ida* came into the hands of private dealer Thomas Perner, who presented her to Prof Hurum at the annual amburg Fossil and Mineral Fair in Germany - a centre for the **murky world of fossil-trading**.

rof Hurum said when he first saw the blueprint for evolution - the "most beautiful fossil worldwide" - he could not sleep for two ys.

home movie records the dramatic moment.

his is really something that the world has never seen before, this is a unique specimen, totally unique," he says, clearly otional.



ray of *Ida*'s badly fractured left wrist

e says he knew she should be **saved for science** rather than end up hidden from the world in a wealthy private collector's ult.

ut the dealer's asking price was more than \$1 million (£660,000) - ten times the amount even the rarest of fossils fetch on the ack market.

ventually, after six months of negotiations, he managed to raise the cash in Norway and brought *Ida* to Oslo.

## Attenborough: The Link Is No Longer Missing



Prof Hurum - who last summer dug up the fossil **remains of a 50ft marine monster called Predator X** from the permafrost of Spitzbergen, a Norwegian island close to the North Pole - then assembled a "dream team" of experts who worked in secret for two years.

They included palaeontologist Dr Jens Franzen, Dr Holly Smith, of the University of Michigan, and Philip Gingerich, president-elect of the US Paleontological Society.

Researchers could prove the fossil was genuine through X-rays, knowing it is impossible to fake the inner structure of a bone.

Through radiometric dating of Messel's volcanic rocks, they discovered Ida lived 47 million years ago in the Eocene period.

This was when tropical forests stretched right to the poles, and South America was still drifting and had yet to make contact with North America.

During that period, the first whales, horses, bats and monkeys emerged, and the early primates branched into two groups - one group lived on mainly as lemurs, and the second developed into monkeys, apes and humans.

The experts concluded Ida was not simply a lemur but a 'lemur monkey', displaying a mixture of both groups, and therefore placing her at the **very branch of the human line**.

This little creature is going to show us our connection with the rest of the mammals. This is the one that connects us directly with them.

*by David Attenborough*

When **Darwin published his On the Origin of Species in 1859**, he said a lot about transitional species," said Prof Hurum. "and he said that will never be found, a transitional species, and his whole theory will be wrong, so he would be really happy to live today when we publish Ida.

This fossil is really a part of our history; this is part of our evolution, deep, deep back into the aeons of time, 47 million years ago.

This part of our evolution that's been hidden so far, it's been hidden because all the other specimens are so incomplete.

They are so broken there's almost nothing to study and now this wonderful fossil appears and it makes the story so much easier to tell, so it's really a dream come true."

Up until now, the most famous fossil primate in the world has been Lucy, a 3.18-million-year-old hominid found in Ethiopia in 1974.

She was then our earliest known ancestor, and only 40% complete.

**Descended from the apes! My dear, let us hope that it is not true, but if it is, let us pray that it will not become generally known.**

*Letter from Attenborough to Charles Darwin*

Even at 95% complete, Ida was so well preserved in the mud at the bottom of the volcanic lake, there is even evidence of her fur and remains of her last meal.

From this they concluded she was a leaf and fruit eater, and probably lived in the trees around the lake.

The absence of a baculum (penis bone) confirmed she was female, and her milk teeth put her age at about nine-months-old -

maturity, equivalent to a six-year-old human child.

is was the same age as Prof Hurum's daughter Ida, and he named the fossil after her.

e study is being published and put online by the Public Library of Science, a leading academic journal with offices in Britain and the US.



Hurum also found Predator X

Co-author of the scientific paper, Prof Gingerich, likens its importance to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, an ancient Egyptian artefact found in 1799, which allowed us to decipher hieroglyphic writing.

One clue to Ida's fate - and her remarkable preservation as our oldest ancestor - was her badly fractured left wrist.

The team believes this stopped her from climbing and she had to emerge from the trees to drink water from the 250-metre-deep lake.

They think she was overcome by carbon dioxide gas from the crater, and sunk to the bottom where she was preserved in the mud as a time capsule - and a snapshot of evolution.

But amazingly this final piece of **Darwin's jigsaw** was almost lost to science when German authorities tried to turn Messel into a massive landfill rubbish dump.

Eventually, after campaigning by Dr Franzen, the plans were rejected and the fossil-rich lake was designated a World Heritage Site.

ut no doubt there would have been one person happy for the missing link to have remained hidden.

hen **Darwin famously told the Bishop of Worcester's wife** about his theory of evolution, she remarked: "Descended from the apes! My dear, let us hope that it is not true, but if it is, let us pray that it will not become generally known."

ow, it certainly is.

**Ida's discovery has been made into an Atlantic Productions' documentary, presented by Sir David Attenborough. See more at [www.revealingthelink.com/](http://www.revealingthelink.com/).**

## COMMENTS TO THE STORY

o those who don't know exactly, a missing link is some connection between groups, (phylum, class, order, family, genera, species, race.), of which we have no direct evidence. It follows that there will be many missing links, depending on which branches, (or twigs) of the tree are being investigated. Furthermore, a missing link is not necessarily a whole animal or plant. Several links between groups may be needed, all of which may be missing, (or found), at different times. e.g. a link between herbivores and carnivores may be teeth, or may be some other part, but separated by aeons. To talk boldly of "the missing link" is only wise if one knows which of the above mentioned groups one is talking about. Those who try to deny evolution must beware, (ok David?).

osted By :Sara [Report This](#)

avid,

he god of impossible?

:1-2:3) The Genesis 1 account conflicts with the order of events that are known to science.

Genesis 1:1, the earth and "heaven" are created together "in the beginning," whereas according to current estimates, the earth and universe are about 4.6 and 13.7 billion years old, respectively.

Genesis, the earth is created (1:1) before light (1:3), sun and stars (1:16); birds and whales (1:21) before reptiles and insects (1:24); and flowering plants (1:11) before any animals (1:20). The order of events known from science is in each case just the opposite.

od creates light and separates light from darkness, and day from night, on the first day. Yet he didn't make the light producing objects (the sun and the stars) until the fourth day (1:14-19). And how could there be "the evening and the morning" on the first day if there was no sun to mark them?

our God has no idea on the process of photosynthesis, lo

osted By :Loz [Report This](#)

avid Attenborough came up with a fossil found in slate a few weeks ago, claiming it was the evidence of the missing link. Now he says Ida is the missing link. There is plenty of money in this fossil finding field to be made. TV, books etc. He and the so called crackpot scientists only do it for the money deluding themselves to justify the government grants, which keep them in a job. What a sham! God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

Genesis Chapter 1, verse 24. Any livestock farmer and geneticist will tell you, like(kind) always begets like. Please stop them deluding THE WORLD, with their unsubstantiated rubbish. GOD BLESS THE TRUTH. They will do anything rather than admit God, his son Jesus and The Holy Ghost are true, thereby doing untold damage to society. Just look at the state of our society and many more around THE WORLD. Yours Truly David  
Posted By :[David Barry Ward](#) [Report This](#)

Laura, further to mat's comment!

Laura has teeth that match chimpanzees/humans, she also has a talus bone that matches chimps/humans and grooming claw therefore, she is not a lemur and this puts her on the lineage path of apes and humans. The bonobo chimp has matched at 99.4% of human DNA and let's not forget humans can differ by 2%. Within our DNA code, we have the code for tails (why would a god do that?), example of this is within embryology, human fetuses at 10 weeks old have tails and gills, not only humans but chimps/dogs and other mammals do it because man is an ape, and we are all animals, humans are on a different evolutionary lineage to our cousins. Human chromosome 2 is an ape chromosome which matches chimps 100%. Search human/chimp retrovirus, we have the same virus infections in our DNA, chance this being a fluke is trillions to 1.

Search the net for 'genome' mutations it's this change over millions over years that has made us who we are  
Posted By :[Loz](#) [Report This](#)

In this pointless discussion, I'm more worried about my missing baculum. Such a useful piece of kit should never have been dropped from anatomy, either by evolution, or by God.

Posted By :[BLZBub](#) [Report This](#)

I wouldn't normally disparage someone's religion, (in particular), but when posted as an argument against the fossil evidence and evolution, I just have to point out a few quirks, (Laura):- God lets the animals, (and I assume, plants), have evolution to play with. But he wouldn't let homo-sap's have a go, Oh no!. Instead, he allows evolution to take its course, then, once apes have evolved, he gives homo-sap's ALMOST IDENTICAL DNA. How cool is that?... (Bridget):-As Sara points out, Galileo said, (on a science also denied for years by the church), "It still moves". The Church was wrong and eventually modified its stance. The more it is denied by a mere conjecture, the more evolution shows its worth.

Posted By :[mat](#) [Report This](#)

Copyright©2009 BskyB