

"LUCY"

Australopithecus afarensis

A spectacular find

When Lucy's skeleton was found in 1974, it was the most complete and best-preserved early hominid ever found. Scientists knew nothing about this species before Lucy. With a partial skeleton—nearly 40% complete—they could tell a lot about her and how her species lived.

Many bones tell a more complete story

From Lucy's arm and finger bones, scientists could tell that she spent time in the trees. The lengths of her arm and leg bones were more like those of chimps; however, her foot was not chimp-like. Her spine, pelvis, knee, and foot bones showed that she walked upright on two legs, more like today's humans. She was a mosaic of ape and human traits—a member of a unique species.

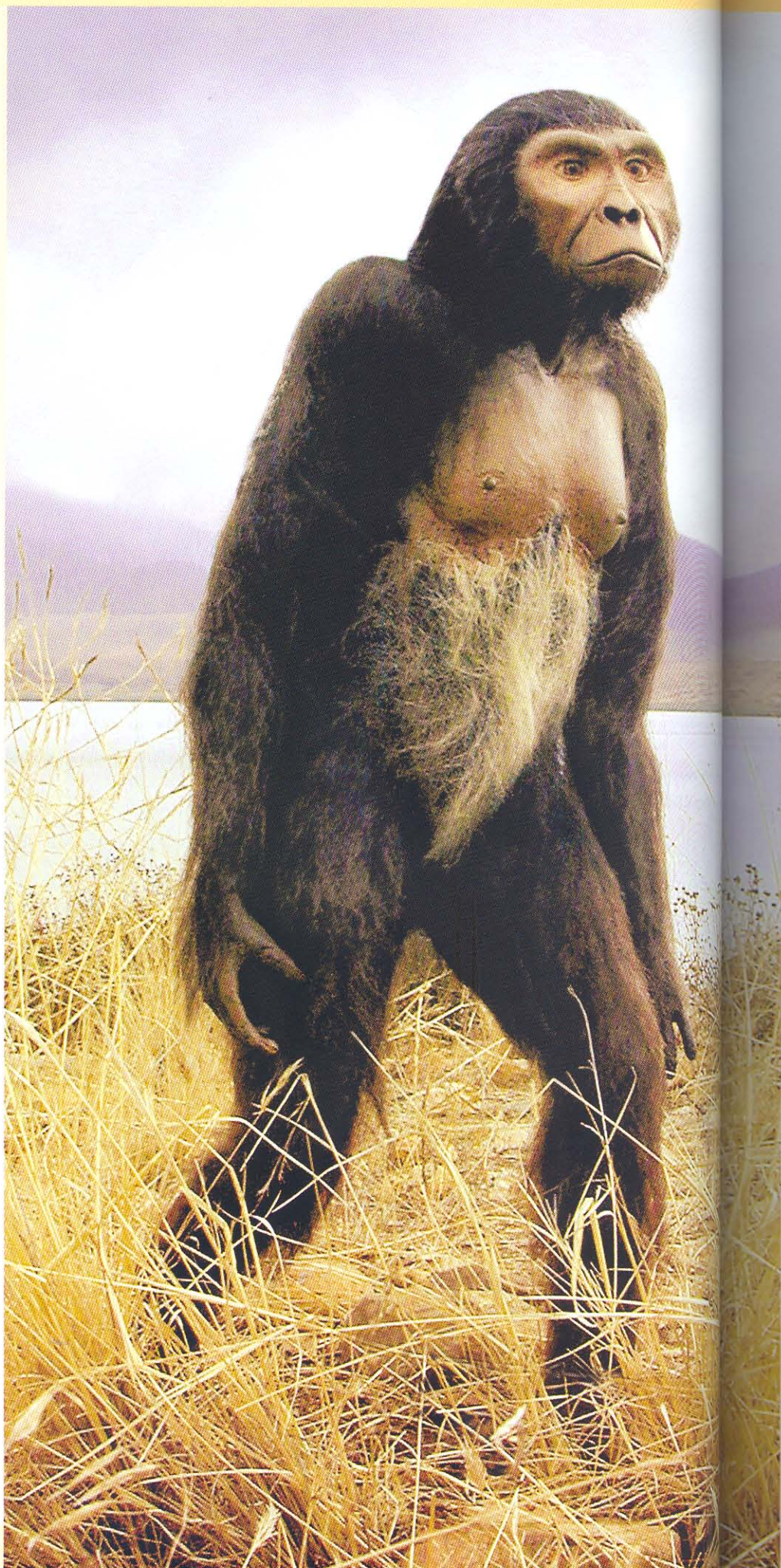
Lucy's name

Her nickname came from the Beatles song *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, which was playing at the researchers' camp when they returned with the fossil. Lucy's Ethiopian name is *Dinquesh*, which means "wonderful thing."

"Lucy" reconstruction

Artist: William Munns

Lucy was a full-grown adult about 3 feet 6 inches tall, weighing about 60 pounds. Her small size indicated that she was female (males were larger). She spent some time in trees, but on the ground she walked on two legs.



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TIMESTONE

Australopithecus afarensis

Sculptural replica of fossil partial skeleton
Australopithecus afarensis—“Lucy”
Found in Hadar, Ethiopia,
in 1974 by Donald Johanson and his team
Age: 3.2 million years

This is the earliest hominid species for which we have a large sample of fossils. The fossil bones provide strong evidence of a primate that walked on two legs.

This australopithecine had many ape-like features. Its teeth and molars were large and its cranial capacity (indicating brain size) was small—about the size of a softball. However, the position of the foramen magnum and the shape of the pelvis, knee, and thigh bones showed that this species walked on two legs. Bipedal walking was our hominid ancestors’ first step toward becoming human.



Sculptural replica of fossil skull
(based on a composite of three males)
Australopithecus afarensis
Fossils found in Hadar, Ethiopia,
in 1976 by Donald Johanson
and his team
Age: 3 million years