

# RANDOM SAMPLES

Edited by Constance Holden

## Tooth Fight

How many paleoanthropologists does it take to locate a molar on the correct side of a fossil jawbone? The short answer to this joke, which was winging around the Internet this month, is 28. That's the number of paleoanthropologists who, in the current issue of the *South African Journal of Science*, declare that a fossilized wisdom tooth belonged in the right rather than the left lower jaw of a famous fossil of a putative human ancestor from Chad.

In 2002, *Sahelanthropus tchadensis* was proposed as the earliest known hominid by paleontologist Michel Brunet of the University of Poitiers, France, and colleagues (*Science*, 12 July 2002, p. 171). But earlier this year, University of Paris X geographer Alain Beauvilain, a former member of Brunet's team, and orthodontist Yves Le Guellec questioned Brunet's placement of the isolated molar in the right lower jawbone and questioned why other fossils found at the same site have not yet been published. Their challenge in last spring's issue of the South African journal, reported widely by the French media, did not cast doubt on the fossil's status, but it did cast a cloud over Brunet's methods.



In the current issue, Brunet presents computed tomography scans showing what he calls an "unambiguous match" between the molar and roots in the right side of the jawbone. The 28 paleoanthropologists signing the letter back up that conclusion. One of the letter's organizers, Tim White of the University of California, Berkeley, notes that Beauvilain's report was translated by College de France geologist Martin Pickford, who discovered a rival fossil candidate for oldest hominid.

But Beauvilain and Pickford—who has now rescinded an earlier apology to Brunet—are fighting back tooth and nail.

In the same journal issue, Beauvilain responds to Brunet's defense by insisting that the molar that was found separately from the jaw was glued into the wrong side. Interviewed by *Science*, Pickford called the multi-author letter an intimidation tactic designed to squelch scientific debate on published fossils.

Beauvilain also seems intent on forcing Brunet to reveal other fossils by raising the tantalizing possibility that leg bones of *Sahelanthropus* may be included in 52 unpublished mammalian fossils from the Chadian site. A leg bone could shed light on whether *Sahelanthropus* was an upright-walking ancestor of humans or a quadrupedal ape. Brunet declines to comment, saying that the fossils are still under study.



## SARS War Memorial

China has no animal-rights movement to speak of. But its scientists still think about the sacrifices made by their research animals. The latest memorial sits on the lawn at the Animal Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences in Beijing, a tribute to the animals that gave their lives to develop a vaccine against severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

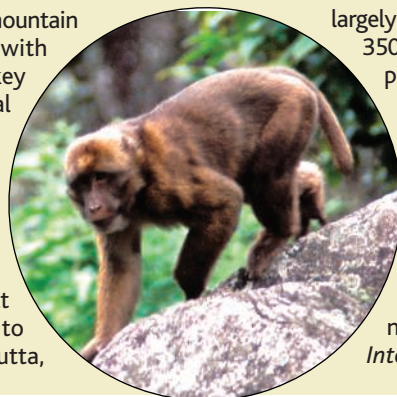
The "Soul-Consoling Stone," as it is named in Chinese, was installed in spring 2003, not long after SARS swept through Asia. Qin Chuan, a pathologist and head of the institute, says the monument is only now being publicized because of promising early vaccine trials (*Science*, 17 December, p. 2021). Qin says she hopes the stone will remind people of the contribution of mice, guinea pigs, rabbits, and monkeys to human health. "After all," she says, "human beings or animals, we are all Nature's creatures."

## New Primate Discovered in India

Scientists surveying biodiversity in remote mountain forests along India's northeastern border with China have stumbled upon a new monkey species: the *Macaca munzala*, or Arunachal macaque.

The first new macaque species discovered anywhere since 1903, the primate is the 21st known macaque species and the eighth in India. The last primate found in India was the golden langur, discovered in 1955.

The Arunachal macaque is "stockily built and has an unusually dark face," according to its discoverers, Anindya Sinha, Aparajita Dutta,



M. D. Madhusudan, and Charudutt Mishra, who work with the Nature Conservation Foundation in Mysore. The animal largely keeps to the forests and lives at altitudes up to 3500 meters, making it one of the highest-dwelling primates in the world.

The animal appears to be thriving even though its habitat is under immense threat from logging and human settlements. The scientists found "a fairly large population" in 14 troops spread over 1200 square kilometers. The team is urging the Indian government to designate the primate's habitat as a "protected area." A paper describing the new macaque will appear in the August 2005 *International Journal of Primatology*.

Edited by Yudhijit Bhattacharjee

**NONPROFIT WORLD**

**Graduate lobbyist.** Patricia McAllister hopes to give U.S. graduate education a higher profile in Washington, D.C., policy circles as the first-ever director of government relations at the Council of Graduate Schools. McAllister, 52, moves over from a similar post at the Educational Testing Service.

**JOBS**

**Sunnier climes.** An electrical engineer who became the first woman to lead an engineering school at a major research university has been named chancellor of the University of California (UC), Santa Cruz. Denice Denton, currently dean of engineering at the University of Washington (UW), Seattle, will take up her new job in February as successor to M.R.C. Greenwood, who was appointed UC provost in February 2004.

Denton, 45, is known for her efforts to improve mathematics and science education

from kindergarten through college and for helping increase the diversity of the undergraduate engineering population. In May, she was among nine scholars who received a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring.

Denton, who has been at UW since 1996, says she was

**PIONEERS**

**Flying high.** Aviation medicine was a fallback career for Padma Bandopadhyay after less-than-perfect eyesight prevented her from becoming a pilot. But after 37 years, she's gone where no woman has gone before, becoming the first female Air Marshal in the history of the Indian Air Force (IAF).



The 59-year-old Bandopadhyay has flown thousands of kilometers in the course of her research on human physiology at high altitudes. She's also co-led a joint expedition with Soviet scientists to the Arctic Circle to understand how long it takes people from the tropics to acclimatize to the extreme cold.

A mother of two, Bandopadhyay says her IAF colleagues, who are predominantly male, have been extremely supportive. "I am not a feminist of any sort," she says.

drawn to UCSC by "its tradition of pioneering, interdisciplinary research" and plans to support the "innovative spirit" of its faculty. She will receive an annual salary of \$275,000.

**Isolated behavior?** The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has appointed Brown University psychologist

David Abrams to oversee behavioral and social science research, a post vacant for nearly 2 years. But the new hire is lukewarm to the community's plea to give basic research a home in one institute.

Abrams, 53, takes over next month as director of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, which leads cross-agency initiatives and collaborations. The previous head, Raynard Kington, was promoted

to NIH deputy director in February 2003.

The South Africa-born Abrams, whose expertise is in behavioral and preventive medicine, says he thinks social and behavioral research "can play a much greater role" in translating findings into treatments. But he questions

the recent recommendation of an NIH-appointed working group to locate basic behavioral and social research within a single, existing institute (*Science*, 10 December, p. 1878). "We're better off not having it in one place,"

he says. That view disappoints advocates such as Alan Kraut, executive director of the American Psychological Society. "My fear is that David's appointment, as good as he is, does not mark any change in how behavioral science will be treated by NIH higher-ups,"



**SIDELINES**

**Heady stuff.** Three Boston-area sisters with more than 2 meters of hair among them have been named Women of the Year by the Luxuriant Flowing Hair Club for Scientists. Johanna Bobrow, a staff scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Elizabeth Bobrow, an electrical engineer with BAE Systems, and Laurel Bobrow, an MIT undergraduate majoring in cognitive science, were chosen through a consensus among the 100-odd club members. The club was started in 2001 with Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker inducted as the first member.



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