

Just Another Extinct Ape

A New Kind of Ancestor: Ardipithecus Unveiled

The oldest known hominin skeleton reveals the body plan of our very early ancestors and the upright origins of humankind

Really?

Many respected human paleontologists reject the claims made by the Ardi discovery team. Point by point refutations have been reported in a number of peer-reviewed scientific journals. They reject Ardi as an upright-walking human ancestor and insist it was just another extinct ape. Here are some reasons why:

Ardi was short, 3'11" in height revealing the overall dimensions of an African ape. Limb proportions are unmistakably ape. Notice the short legs and long arms, the proportions of which overlap with monkeys and extinct apes.

② The skull of 'Ardi' was noticeably smaller than that of a chimpanzee (300-350 cm³). It was reconstructed digitally from over 100 broken pieces crushed down to 4 cm in height. The exact morphology is hard to tell, but based on their best efforts it clearly resembles that of an ape more than anything else.

③ The less-projecting lower face is not unique to the human lineage as claimed. Gibbons, monkeys, and the extinct ape *Ramapithecus* also share this feature.

④ The discover team claims the spine entered at the base of the skull (suggestive of upright posture) as opposed to near the rear of the skull, typical of apes. This is cited as evidence Ardi was evolving to become human and walked like us. However, various living primates share this same feature, such as gibbons and other extinct apes. It is not a characteristic unique to the human lineage.

⑤ Ardi's canines are smaller than chimpanzee but this does not suggest Ardi was evolving to become more human as claimed. Other extinct apes such as *Oreopithecus* have "reduced canines" as well, but no one believes they were our ancestors.

⑥ The wrist does not have locking capabilities typical of knuckle-walking apes like gorillas. The researchers cite this as evidence Ardi was an early ancestor to humans. However, living apes such as Baboons lack knuckle-locking wrists simply because they walk with open palms flat on the ground. Ardi was likely a palmigrade quadruped ape, not a human ancestor.

⑦ The hip was so poorly preserved it was described as "road kill" and crumbled at the slightest touch. The researchers claim it has certain human-like anatomies that allowed Ardi to walk upright. Other leading experts question the digital hip reconstruction because of interpreter bias, saying a far more ape-like hip would have been just as valid.

⑧ Although no lower vertebrae bones were found, researchers assumed Ardi had 6 lower vertebrae like humans (called lordosis) to allow for upright posture and walking upright. Other experts question this. They say it was a speculative inference based upon the questionable hip reconstruction. Ardi most likely had 3 or 4 lower vertebrae, typical of all modern apes.

⑨ The foot bones do not suggest Ardi walked upright in a manner similar to humans as claimed. Instead, the opposable great toe is indistinguishable from African apes and would be useful for limb-grasping. It is a clear indicator Ardi engaged in arboreal (tree) locomotion, not balancing on fallen limbs as it walked along the forest floor. Experts in the field agree there is nothing in the foot that indicates Ardi had the ability to walk upright.

