

## Society of Vertebrate Paleontology's Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting

The 59th annual meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology was held against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains in Denver, Colorado from October 20–23, 1999. More than 1,000 paleontologists assembled for the largest meeting in the society's history to present papers and posters on topics ranging from cladistic theory and fossil preparation to fish heads, bone beds, and dinosaurs. The meeting was kicked off on Wednesday night by a reception at the renovated Denver Museum of Natural History, which was the host institution for the meeting.

As usual, the variety of topics at this meeting was extreme, and included many presentations of applicability to paleoanthropologists and primatologists. Several paleoenvironmental analyses of East African hominid localities were presented. Hideo Nakaya (Kagawa University, Japan), Gen Suwa (University of Tokyo, Japan), and Berhane Asfaw (Rift Valley Reserve, Ethiopia) presented data on the large mammalian fauna from Konso, Ethiopia, where specimens of *Homo erectus* and *Australopithecus boisei* have been found.<sup>1</sup> The Konso stratigraphic formation was divided into six successive faunal zones, of which Zones 4 and 5 (1.45 to 1.35 Ma) were hominid-bearing. Analysis showed a transition from open grassland to mixed grassland and woodland, as indicated by decreasing proportions of alcephalines and increasing numbers of bovids, tragelaphines, and equids. The fauna of Konso is more similar to the Olduvai Bed II assemblage than to the geographically closer Turkana basin, which possibly can be explained by the similarities in altitude between Konso and Olduvai.

Jonathan Wynn (University of Oregon) described four distinct types of

paleosols from the Kanapoi site in Northern Kenya. The majority of hominid specimens, representing *Australopithecus anamensis*, were derived from Dite paleosols, which form in areas with semi-arid to arid climates that have a seasonal moisture regime. This indicates that Kanapoi probably had a relatively open habitat with scrub savanna vegetation. Interestingly, paleoenvironmental reconstructions from Allia Bay, Kenya, the only other locality with *A. anamensis* specimens, may have had a more closed, gallery forest environment.<sup>2</sup>

René Bobe and Kay Behrensmeyer (National Museum of Natural History) presented a taphonomic and pa-

leoecological analysis of the lower Omo valley of Ethiopia. Their results indicate an increase in the woodland environment in Members E and F of the Shungura Formation (2.4 to 2.34 Ma), representing a significant but gradual change in habitat.

On Friday, Don Lofgren (Raymond Alf Museum of Paleontology) and co-workers reported that preliminary screen washing has yielded the oldest specimen ever of *Plesiadapis* from California. This specimen, which resembles *Plesiadapis rex*, is of special significance because it is from the only Paleocene site west of Utah. It is hoped that discoveries from this site will allow faunal comparisons be-

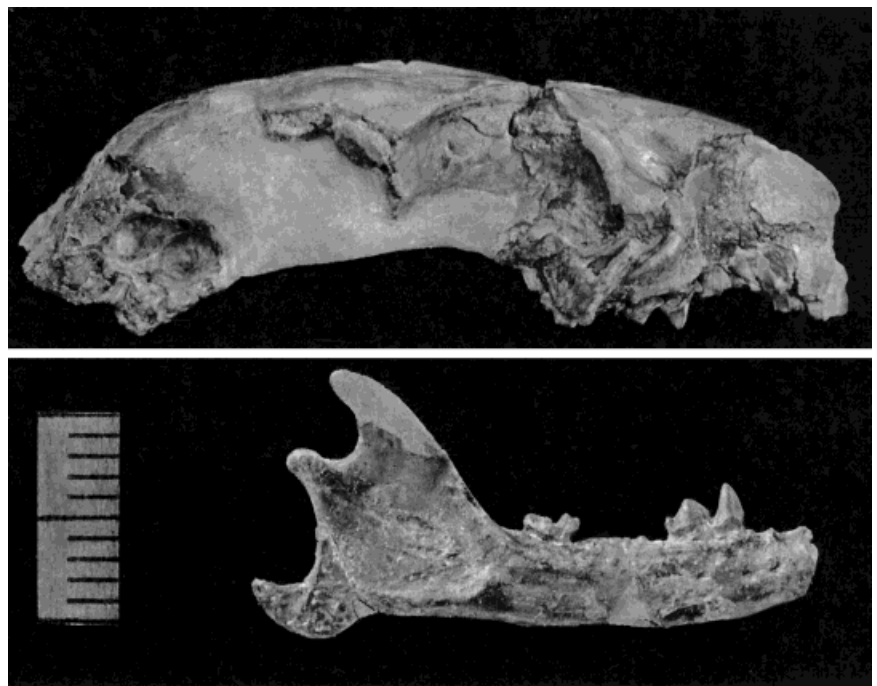


Figure 1. Composite of *Omomys carteri*. Reconstruction by J. Alexander, 1999. Skull elements = AMNH 130,000, collected by B. Burger, 1998. Mandible (left side reversed) = ROM 46046, collected by GF Sternberg, 1950. Both specimens from Bridger Fm. Wyoming; Bridgerian Eocene type. Scale bar = 10 mm. (Photo courtesy of John Alexander and Chester Tarka.)

tween West Coast and Rocky Mountain sites. Paleomagnetic analysis, more screenwashing efforts, and expansion of the search area are planned for the future.

The final day of the meetings included several presentations featuring studies of both extant and extinct primate groups. Frank Cuzzo and Michelle Sauter (University of Colorado, Boulder) conducted a study on dental variation in a group of *Lemur catta* individuals from the Beza Mahafaly Special Reserve in Madagascar.<sup>3</sup> Dental casts were taken from living individuals; metric and morphological data were recorded. Among the more important points was the discovery of a distinct lower fourth premolar metaconid in 19 of 21 specimens surveyed. This is significant because the absence of this trait traditionally has been used as a diagnostic feature of ring-tailed lemurs.

On the extinct-primate front, Gregg Gunnell (University of Michigan) introduced a revised phylogeny of adapiform primates focusing on the relationships and origins of *Notharctus* and *Smilodectes*. Gunnell proposed that *Notharctus* originated within the *Cantius* radiation and concluded that the genus *Cantius* is not monophyletic. John Alexander and Ross MacPhee (American Museum of Natural History) presented the first skull of *Omomyx carteri*, from the Grizzly Buttes in Southwest Wyoming (Middle Eocene). The specimen included rostral, frontal, and occipital regions, as well as an endocast with partial preservation of the inner-ear ossicles. This discovery may help to resolve taxonomic questions within the Omomyidae.

General information about the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology can be found at its web site: <http://www.museum.state.il.us/svp/>. The 2000 meeting will be held in Mexico City from October 25–28. For more information, e-mail [SVP@sherwood-group.com](mailto:SVP@sherwood-group.com) or consult the society web site.

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## REFERENCES

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- 3 Sauter ML, Sussman RW, Gould L. 1999. The socioecology of the ringtailed lemur: thirty-five years of research. *Evol Anthropol* 8:120–132.

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