Written by Administrator Wednesday, 24 July 2013 02:51 -

"47 Million Year Old Human Ancestor" found, claims a press release from Natural History Museum, University of Oslo, also reported BBC News and PLoS ONE, 19 May 2009. Palaeontologists have found "the most complete fossil primate ever found" in the Messel Shale Pit, near Darmstadt, Germany. The creature has been given the scientific name *Darwinius masillae* 

nicknamed Ida, and belongs to a group of extinct primates known as adapids. These are similar to lemurs, but do not have a toothcomb or a grooming claw – two distinctive features of lemurs.

The fossil is 95% complete and has traces of soft tissue and stomach contents. In their article in the journal PLoS ONE the researchers describe the animals as "a weaned and independent-feeding female that died in her first year of life, and might have attained a body weight of 650–900 g (about 2lb) had she lived to adulthood. She was an agile, nail-bearing, generalized arboreal quadruped living above the floor of the Messel rain forest." The stomach contents indicate it ate berries and plants. The wrist shows signs of a healing fracture and the creature is believed to have died when "she was overcome by carbon dioxide gas whilst from drinking from the Messel lake: the still waters of the lake were often covered by a low lying blanket of the gas as a result of the volcanic forces that formed the lake and which were still active. Hampered by her broken wrist, Ida slipped into unconsciousness, was washed into the lake, and sunk to the bottom, where unique conditions preserved her for 47 million years."

The animal had grasping hands with nails, rather than claws, forward facing eyes and a talus (a foot bone) that looks "almost anthropoid". With these mix of features the fossil is claimed to be a direct link in the evolution of humans from early primates.

However, not all scientists are so impressed. The BBC reported: "Independent experts are keen to see the new fossil but somewhat sceptical of any claim that it could be 'a missing link'. Henry Gee, a senior editor at the journal *Nature*, said the term itself was misleading and that the scientific community would need to evaluate its significance. 'It's extremely nice to have a new find and it will be well-studied,' he said. But he added that it was not likely to be in the same league as major discoveries such as 'Flores man' or feathered dinosaurs."

The BBC article goes on to say: "Dr Chris Beard, curator of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and author of The Hunt for the Dawn Monkey, said he was 'awestruck' by the publicity machine surrounding the new fossil. He argued that it could damage the popularisation of science if the creature was not all that it was hyped up to be."

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## BBC, Oslo University

**Editorial Comment**: Henry Gee is correct. The term "missing link" is misleading, especially as this creature has been found. The fossil most resembles a group of animals called prosimians, which includes lemurs, tarsiers, bush babies, galagos and aye ayes. Grasping hands, nails and forward facing eyes are all general primate features, seen in prosimians, monkeys and apes, so there is nothing new or specifically human about them.

This is a particularly splendid fossil because it is so well preserved, but the animal's healing fracture, sudden death, and the extinction of adapids, all remind us the world is going downhill. Evidence of degeneration of world is further reinforced by the description of the fossil as a rainforest animal. Germany is no longer a rainforest. In all aspects, this fossil is better evidence for Biblical history of the world, than for evolution. (Ref. mammals, anthropology, primates)

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