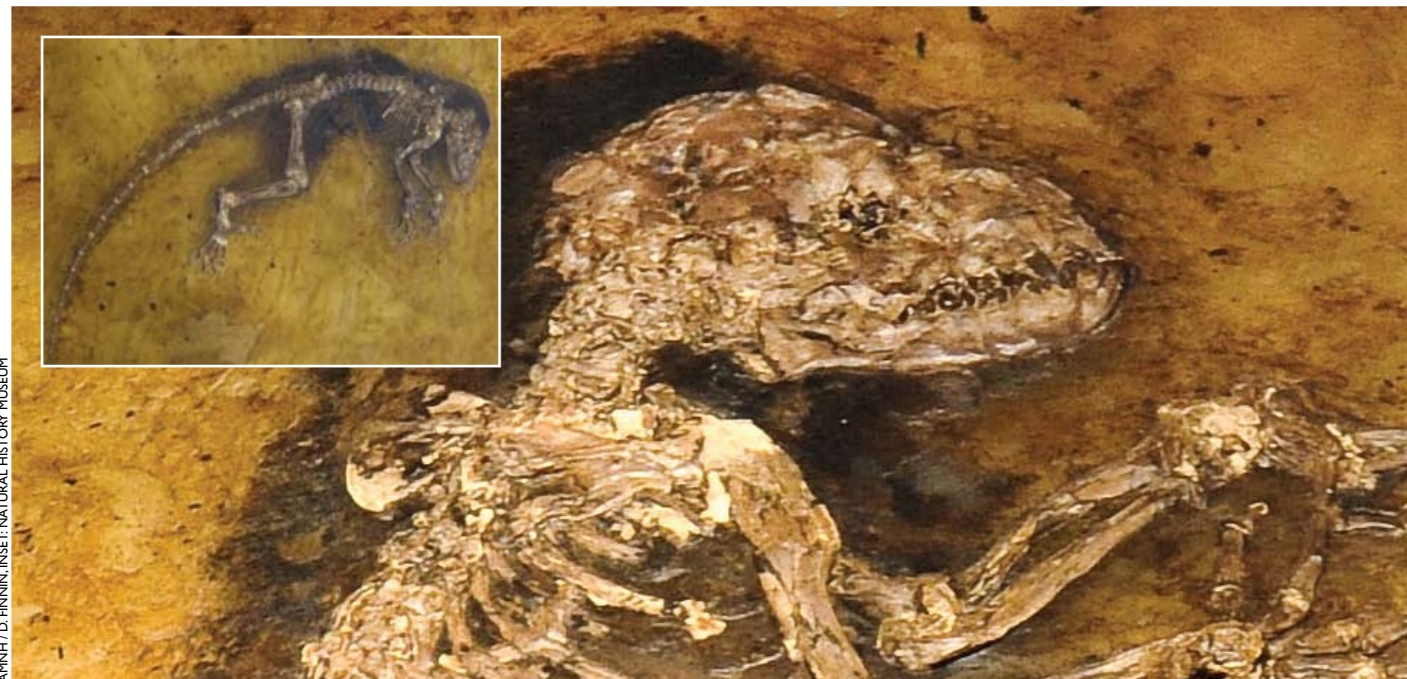


NEWS IN BRIEF

DO YOU HAVE A MAMMAL STORY YOU'D LIKE US TO COVER? PLEASE EMAIL THE EDITOR, AMY@PTES.ORG, OR WRITE TO US AT MAMMALS UK MAGAZINE, PTES, 15 CLOISTERS HOUSE, 8 BATTERSEA PARK ROAD, LONDON SW8 4BG



AMNH / D. FINNIN, INSET: NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

n 'STUNNING' FOSSIL PRIMATE GOES ON DISPLAY

In May, a small female primate became an overnight celebrity – about 47 million years after her untimely death. The animal, nicknamed *Ida*, is the only complete primate fossil discovered so far and as such her remains give a unique insight into the origins of our own mammal order. *Ida*, or *Darwinius masillae* to use her scientific name, is so complete that palaeontologists have been able to study not only every bone in her body, but they have also examined her last meal, which is preserved in her stomach. Even the outline of her fur is clearly visible, thanks to the almost miraculous quality of preservation. *Ida* belonged to the extinct family Adapoidae. Despite a superficially lemur-like appearance, adapoids are now known to be early examples of the haplorhines – the primate group that includes most modern primate groups, including tarsiers, monkeys, apes and humans. *Ida* is not a recent discovery – her

Casts of the extraordinary fossil primate *Darwinius masillae*, known as *Ida*, are now on public display. The original (inset) is in Oslo.

GET THE LATEST

MAMMAL NEWS
We also publish news on our website. Why not visit www.ptes.org next time you are online?

fossilised remains were unearthed at Messel Pit in Germany's Rhine Valley in 1983. The pit was once a deep lake with a bed of thick anoxic sediment – corpses that floated to the bottom were preserved in the absence of scavenging animals or the micro-organisms that normally promote decomposition. The site has yielded a great many important fossils, but none has generated such widespread excitement as *Ida*. The fanfare and hype which accompanied her unveiling have come in for some criticism, and not everyone agrees with the assertion that *Ida* and her kind may represent the earliest primate ancestors of human-kind. But even if *Ida* is not part of our direct lineage, she is still remarkable. Mammal palaeontologist at the Natural History Museum, Dr Jerry Hooker explains her significance; 'We can't call this a direct ancestor, but because it's so complete it tells us so much. Adapoids are no longer stem lemurs, they are stem haplorhines. It's a brilliant specimen.' You can now see a cast of the

fossil on public display at the Natural History Museum in London. The original, meanwhile, has been returned to the University of Oslo.

n HELP FOR SCOTLAND'S HIGHLAND TIGERS

A new project aiming to save the Scottish wildcat from extinction in one of its last strongholds was launched in May by Scottish Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham at the Highland Wildlife Park. The Cairngorms Wildcat Project is a partnership between the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Forestry Commission Scotland, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the Scottish Gamekeepers' Association and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The most visible component of the project will be an awareness-raising campaign branded 'Highland Tiger', which seeks to encourage responsible domestic cat ownership (i.e. increased neutering and vaccination) in the Cairngorms National Park and to support the work of organisations



LAURIE CAMPBELL

that neuter feral cats. The project team will also work with land managers to ensure that predator control is wildcat friendly and that the wildcat population and the extent of hybridisation and disease are monitored.

For more information about the Scottish wildcat and the Cairngorms Wildcat Project, including how you might be able to help, please visit www.highlandtiger.com.

The Cairngorms Wildcat Project seeks to educate landowners and cat owners in the ways they can help our most threatened and elusive carnivore.

n PTES FUNDED CHEETAH RESEARCH WINS AWARD

We were delighted to hear from Mohammad Farhadinia that he has been awarded a prestigious Dutch conservation award. The Future for Nature Award was presented to Mohammad at Burger Zoo by Sir David Attenborough in recognition of his work, funded by PTES, on Iranian cheetahs. Mohammad wrote to us after the event and said 'A total of 148 wildlife conservationists from 56 countries around the world participated in the competition. I am sure (winning) it will be a



Mohammad Farhadinia receives his Future for Nature award from Sir David Attenborough.

Latest grants

PTES is pleased to announce its latest round of funding, in which grants have been awarded to the following projects:

Predictive modelling of bat-habitat relationships on different spatial scales
Chloe Bellamy, University of Leeds

Suffolk's harvest mice in focus
Dr Simone Bullion, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

The national Bechstein's bat survey
Julia Hanmer, Bat Conservation Trust

Dormice forever: phase 2 of the North Wales dormouse project
Adrian Lloyd Jones, North Wales Wildlife Trust

Mid-Wales red squirrel recovery project
Beverley Lewis, Brecknock Wildlife Trust

Habitat fragmentation, dispersal and population genetics of the dormouse in southwest England
Cheryl Mills, University of Exeter

significant milestone in my personal life. I would like to thank you so much for your advice and help which empowered me to do my job in the best way.' Congratulations, Mohammad. You can read more about Mohammad's work at www.iraniancheetah.org.

n WICKED NEWS FOR RED SQUIRRELS

The Wicked Fruit Company is a small award-winning chocolate manufacturer based in Carlisle. In April they launched the Wicked Woodland Bar – a delicious chocolate treat containing hazel nuts, pine kernels and bilberries. Since these extra ingredients also form part of the red squirrel's diet they have kindly offered to donate a

percentage of all the money raised from the sale of these bars to PTES in order to further red squirrel conservation. We would just like to say how very grateful we are to them. For stockists visit www.wickedfruit.co.uk/where_to_buy.

Wonderfully wicked – a share of profits from Wicked Woodland Bars goes to help red squirrels.



PTES on the road

The PTES outreach team is continuing to spread the word about our work at events all around the country. Our displays raise awareness of wildlife conservation issues, inform people about how they can get involved with our surveys and projects and educate young people. There are always fun activities and competitions for all ages, so why not make a day of it and come and meet us at one of these upcoming events?

- | Fun Days, Battersea Park Children's Zoo, London 29th July and 26th August
- | British Birdwatching Fair, Rutland 21st–23rd August
- | Epping Forest Festival, Essex 6th September
- | Bentley Weald Wood Fair, East Sussex 18th–20th September
- | Kent Goes Wild, Mote Park Maidstone 26th–27th September

If you'd like PTES to attend your event, or visit your school or local group, please call the office or email emily@ptes.org.

