

Published on *American Geosciences Institute* (<https://www.americangeosciences.org>)

Home > EARTH: Redefining Homo - Does Our Family Tree Need More Branches?

EARTH: Redefining Homo - Does Our Family Tree Need More Branches?

EARTH: Redefining Homo - Does Our Family Tree Need More Branches?

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maureen Moses (mmoses@americangeosciences.org)

8/23/2016

Alexandria, VA - Human evolution and paleoanthropology are tricky subjects, not just because of the rarity of these fossils, but also because human nature seems to be getting in the way of modern taxonomy. In a field that is generally governed by logical rules when it comes to identifying new fossils, scientists are noticed there are some peculiarities applied to our own genus, Homo.

The story of the genus Homo is as much rooted in historical cultural norms as it is in the modern scientific sector. The institution of the 1700s Linnaean classification system left the definition of Homo as the highly philosophical "to know thyself," and even today scientists must face the challenges of human exceptionalism and now-defunct evolutionary theories trickling into their studies. Added complexity comes from the fact that there are still so many questions about where the demarcation of different species is is often highly debated as well.

Is it brain size; limb, hand and foot proportions; the ability to communicate or use tools? How do the added complexities of new Homo species found in Asia further rewrite the history of the genus and other hominins? In the September issue, EARTH Magazine delves into the challenges that have arisen as scientists still ask, "What makes a human, human?" Read at: <http://bit.ly/2bC63Yf>.

The September 2016 electronic issue of EARTH Magazine is ready for download at www.earthmagazine.org. In addition to stories like "Redefining Homo," we bring you the science behind the headlines and share recent developments from the geoscience community like how glaciologists are employing cost-efficient tools like drones and automated kayaks to get as close as they can to the action on the glacier, how firefighters are benefitting from earthquake sensor networks, and the important role ocean bacteria could play in Earth's climate system.

###

Keep up to date with the latest happenings in Earth, energy and environment news with EARTH Magazine online at: www.earthmagazine.org. Published by the American Geosciences Institute, EARTH is your source for the science behind the headlines.

###

The American Geosciences Institute is a nonprofit federation of geoscientific and professional associations that represents more than 250,000 geologists, geophysicists and other earth scientists. Founded in 1948, AGI provides information services to geoscientists, serves as a voice of shared interests in the profession, plays a major role in strengthening geoscience education, and strives to increase public awareness of the vital role the geosciences play in society's use of resources, resiliency to natural hazards, and interaction with the environment.

Press Release PDF:

