



**EMBARGOED RELEASE:**

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Contact: Elizabeth Hillman: 240.461.3053

[elizabeth\\_hillman@discovery.com](mailto:elizabeth_hillman@discovery.com)

- OR -

Joshua Weinberg: 240.328.3988

[joshua\\_weinberg@discovery.com](mailto:joshua_weinberg@discovery.com)

**DISCOVERING ARDI**

**A DISCOVERY CHANNEL EXCLUSIVE, WORLD PREMIERE SPECIAL AND  
COMPANION WEBSITE DOCUMENTS THE RESEARCH BEHIND BREAKING  
NEWS ABOUT HUMAN EVOLUTION**

- *DISCOVERING ARDI* *Airs Sunday, October 11 at 9 PM (ET/PT)* -
- *Special CBS News Produced Roundtable Discussion* *Airs at 11 PM (ET/PT)* -  
*Immediately Following DISCOVERING ARDI*

(Silver Spring, Md.) — Following today's publication in the journal *Science* on the discovery and study of a 4.4 million-year-old female partial skeleton nicknamed "Ardi," Discovery Channel will present a world premiere special, **DISCOVERING ARDI, Sunday October 11 at 9 PM (ET/PT)** documenting the sustained, intensive investigation leading up to this landmark publication of the *Ardipithecus ramidus* fossils.

**UNDERSTANDING ARDI**, a one-hour special produced in collaboration with CBS News will air at 11 PM (ET/PT) immediately following **DISCOVERING ARDI**. The special is moderated by Investigation Discovery's Paula Zahn, host and executive producer of **ON THE CASE WITH PAULA ZAHN**. The panel includes research team members Dr. Tim White, Dr. Yohannes Haile-Selassie, Dr. Giday WoldeGabriel, Dr. Owen Lovejoy, and science journalist Ann Gibbons.

Discovery today launches an extensive website which serves as a resource center to accompany the program. Visitors to [www.discovery.com/ardi](http://www.discovery.com/ardi) will find a wide variety of materials, including timelines, interviews with the international research team, a recreation of the landscape in which "Ardi" lived and, for the first time ever seen, artist's renderings of what "Ardi" would have looked like when alive.

The scientific investigation began in the Ethiopian desert 17 years ago, and now opens a new chapter on human evolution, revealing the first evolutionary steps our ancestors took after we diverged from a common ancestor we once shared with living chimpanzees. "Ardi's" centerpiece skeleton, the other hominids she lived with, and the rocks, soils, plants and animals that made up her world were analyzed in laboratories around the world, and the scientists have now published their findings in the prestigious journal *Science*.

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"Ardi" is now the oldest skeleton from our (hominid) branch of the primate family tree. These Ethiopian discoveries reveal an early grade of human evolution in Africa that predated the famous *Australopithecus* nicknamed "Lucy." *Ardipithecus* was a woodland creature with a small brain, long arms, and short legs. The pelvis and feet show a primitive form of two-legged walking on the ground, but *Ardipithecus* was also a capable tree climber, with long fingers and big toes that allowed their feet to grasp like an ape's. The discoveries answer old questions about how hominids became bipedal.

The international research team weighed in on the scope of the project and its findings:

"These are the results of a scientific mission to our deep African past, said project co-director and geologist, Dr. Giday WoldeGabriel of the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

"The novel anatomy that we describe in these papers fundamentally alters our understanding of human origins and early evolution," said project anatomist and evolutionary biologist, Professor C. Owen Lovejoy, Kent State University:

Project co-director and paleontologist Professor Tim White of the Human Evolution Research Center at the University of California Berkeley adds, "*Ardipithecus* is not a chimp. It's not a human. It's what we used to be."

"Discovery Channel is thrilled to tell the story of *Ardipithecus ramidus*. We will show our viewers the scientific analysis undertaken by 47 scientists from around the world to piece together the hominid bones, link the evidence of thousands of other animal and plant fossils, and tell the story of a scientific find of this scale. It makes incredibly compelling television. **DISCOVERING ARDI** embodies Discovery's core mission – a relentless thirst for knowledge," said John Ford, President and General Manager Discovery Channel.

**DISCOVERING ARDI** is the result of a unique ten-year collaboration between the Middle Awash research project and Primary Pictures, of Atlanta. Director Rod Paul and his team worked closely with the scientists to develop an unprecedented level of detail, accuracy, and coverage of the discovery of *Ardipithecus ramidus*, much of it as it happened, on location in Ethiopia. Through permissions granted by the Ethiopian Government, initial filming took place in 1999, and was followed by three additional shoots in the desert research area and at the National Museum in Addis Ababa. Additional filming was done at The University of Tokyo laboratory of project scientist Dr. Gen Suwa, as well as numerous locations in the United States.

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The film uses both location sequences and extensive computer-generated animation to detail the original research. Dramatic aerials were filmed in 2007, capturing the stark beauty and drama of the Middle Awash depression. No re-creations took place. In 2007, Primary Pictures reached agreement with the Discovery Channel for that network to have exclusive broadcast rights for both **DISCOVERING ARDI** as well as a companion hour to be broadcast in the coming year. Both programs are designed to bring the many discoveries of the Middle Awash team to a wide viewing public. **DIRTY JOBS** host Mike Rowe narrates **DISCOVERING ARDI**.

**DISCOVERING ARDI** begins its story with the 1974 discovery of *Australopithecus afarensis* in Hadar, northeastern Ethiopia. Nicknamed "Lucy," this 3.2 million year old skeleton was, at the time, the oldest hominid skeleton ever found. As the Discovery Channel special documents, Lucy's title would be overtaken twenty years later by the 1994 discovery of "Ardi" in Ethiopia's Afar region in the Middle Awash study area. It would take an elite international team of experts the next fifteen years to delicately, meticulously and methodically piece together "Ardi" and her lost world in order to reveal her significance.

Discovery will offer a comprehensive, immersive experience for online users at: [www.discovery.com/ardi](http://www.discovery.com/ardi). This special companion website to **DISCOVERING ARDI** includes *The Ardipithecus Handbook*, a rich interactive that explores the major elements of the "Ardi" discovery in chapters: *A Chronicle of Discovery* – a photo time-line featuring images taken by the Middle Awash team during three field seasons spent excavating the skeleton in the Ethiopia desert; and *Bringing "Ardi" to Life*, the exclusive illustrated story of how the celebrated natural history artist Jay Matternes recreated "Ardi" with painstaking, remarkable accuracy.

Video assets at [www.discovery.com/ardi](http://www.discovery.com/ardi) include a multiple playlist featuring:

- *Building an Ancestor* – How science and advanced engineering technology transformed a fragile partial skeleton into a walking, tree-climbing digital hominid.
- *Why We Stood Up* - Video extras featuring Dr. Owen Lovejoy making the case for his compelling theory of why our ancestors took a chance on bipedality.
- *The Discoverers Speak* - Reflections, conclusions and questions from the Ethiopian and American team scientists.

**DISCOVERING ARDI** is produced for Discovery Channel by Primary Pictures. Rod Paul is executive producer. Paul Gasek is executive producer for Discovery Channel.