HEM ORGANISMS TO HOMININS: A GROUP HISTORY OF PRIMATES

As the New York Academy of Sciences celebrates its 175th anniversary, the Academy presents a special exhibition, “The Human Connection: From Primates to Hominins.” The exhibition features more than 250 artifacts and interactive displays that highlight the evolution of humans and other primates. Visitors can explore the development of human characteristics, such as language, tool use, and complex social structures. The exhibition also presents evidence of the diverse habitats and environments from which our ancestors emerged. “The Human Connection: From Primates to Hominins” is open to the public at the Academy’s Hamilton Building in New York City from March 17 to August 15, 2005. For more information, visit www.nyas.org/humanconnection

Meeting of the Molecules

Choose Your Rat

Imagery

Snakes Aloft

Most snakes get around by crawling, but a few species, such as the paradise tree snake (Chrysopelea paradisi; above), take to the air. Learn more about these adventurous serpents at an image-packed site created by postdoc Jake Socha of Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois. Native to southern Asia, the five species of flying snakes can’t gain altitude like a bird or bat. Instead, they launch themselves into the air and parachute, flattening their bodies to slow their descent. Herpetologists aren’t sure why the snakes adopted the aerial habit—perhaps to avoid predators or pursue prey. The site showcases photos and videos of the reptiles flinging themselves from high perches.

www.flyingsnake.org

Educational Tools

Earth, the Early Years

It’s hard enough to remember what you did last Wednesday afternoon, let alone what happened during the Jurassic period. Geologic Time, a new interactive timeline from the Smithsonian Institution, offers a handy reference on the different stages of Earth’s past. The site spotlights the geological and biological events of the different eons, eras, periods, and epochs. For example, you can leap back to the Archean Eon, which lasted from 4 billion to 2.5 billion years ago, when life originated and today’s continents formed. Photo albums display representative rocks and fossils from each time. While Allosaurus and other dinosaurs stalked the land during the Jurassic, these ammonites (below), relatives of today’s squid, plied the seas. The site also includes backgrounder on concepts such as radioactive dating and plate tectonics.

www.nmnh.si.edu/paleo/geotime

Database

Visualizing Eye Diseases

Students and researchers studying eye diseases might want to focus on this new pathology collection from the U.S. National Eye Institute (NEI). The database presents 1040 case descriptions of eye illnesses, injuries, and disorders gathered by the late David Cogan, an ophthalmologist at Harvard Medical School and NEI. Examples range from cataracts to a parasitic worm infestation of the retina. Featuring more than 3000 photos, the collection is particularly strong on certain topics such as the retinal degeneration spurred by diabetes. You can search the cases by location in the eye, diagnosis, and type of tissue abnormality.

vision4.nei.nih.gov/Cogan/index.jsp