

Fossils of extinct human species found

by UPI

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - A South African-led study has uncovered fossils of a new species of small-bodied humans that once populated the Micronesian Island of Palau. Since the discovery of a so-called hobbit fossil from the island of Flores in Indonesia, scientists have debated whether those remains are of modern humans, reduced in stature for some undetermined reason, or whether they represent a new species, *Homo floresiensis*. The fossils discovered by Professor Lee Berger of the University of Witwatersrand and colleagues from Rutgers and Duke universities in the United States were those of small-bodied humans that lived between 1,400 and 3,000 years ago and share some -- although not all -- features with *H. floresiensis*. A preliminary analysis suggests the people had many craniofacial features considered unique to *H. sapiens*. Thus, the scientists said, they were likely from a human population that acquired reduced stature for some reason. But the Palau fossils also have features seen in *H. floresiensis*, suggesting some features taken as evidence *H. floresiensis* are members of a separate species, might be a common adaptation in humans of reduced stature. A documentary concerning the discovery is to premiere Monday on the National Geographic Channel in the United States.

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