

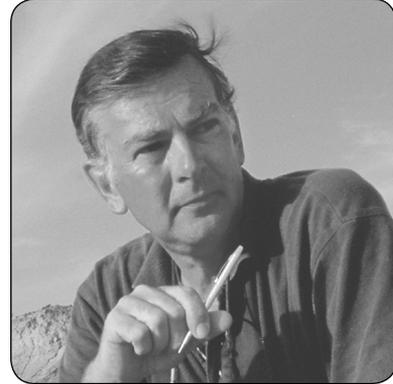
Donald Johanson



HOW HE AFFECTED THE WORLD Donald Johanson played an important role in the discovery and description of early human fossils.



As you read the biography below, think about how the scientist's knowledge helped him in his work.



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DONALD JOHANSON

1943–

Donald Johanson first studied anthropology when he switched majors in college. During summers, he worked on archaeological digs. Later, in 1973, Johanson led a team to Ethiopia. He discovered a fossilized hominid knee. The next year, Johanson made his most important find—a female skeleton nearly 40 percent complete. Johanson nicknamed her Lucy, and determined that Lucy belonged to the *Australopithecine* species of **hominids**. In 1975, Johanson and his team found what they called the First Family. The First Family consisted of the fossilized bones of 13 individuals, more than likely 9 adults and 4 children.

All of these fossils needed to be analyzed. Johanson enlisted the help of fellow scientist Tim White. Together they dated the bones through several tests. They also compared physical characteristics. Johanson and White concluded that all of the fossils belonged to a single species of hominid that they named *Australopithecus afarensis*. At the time, this theory was controversial. Today, it is widely accepted.

VOCABULARY

hominid an early ancestor of humans

excavation the action or process of digging

Johanson founded a non-profit research institution in 1981 that conducts studies of prehistory. This group has made other expeditions to Africa. Among their later finds are a *Homo habilis* skeleton and other *Australopithecus afarensis* fossils.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Draw Conclusions Why do you think it is important for scientists to date the fossils that they find?

2. Evaluate Why do you think Johanson’s discoveries were so important?

ACTIVITY

Do research to find out more about how an anthropologist or an archaeologist works in his or her field. Write a job description for one of the jobs, listing necessary tools and tasks of the job.