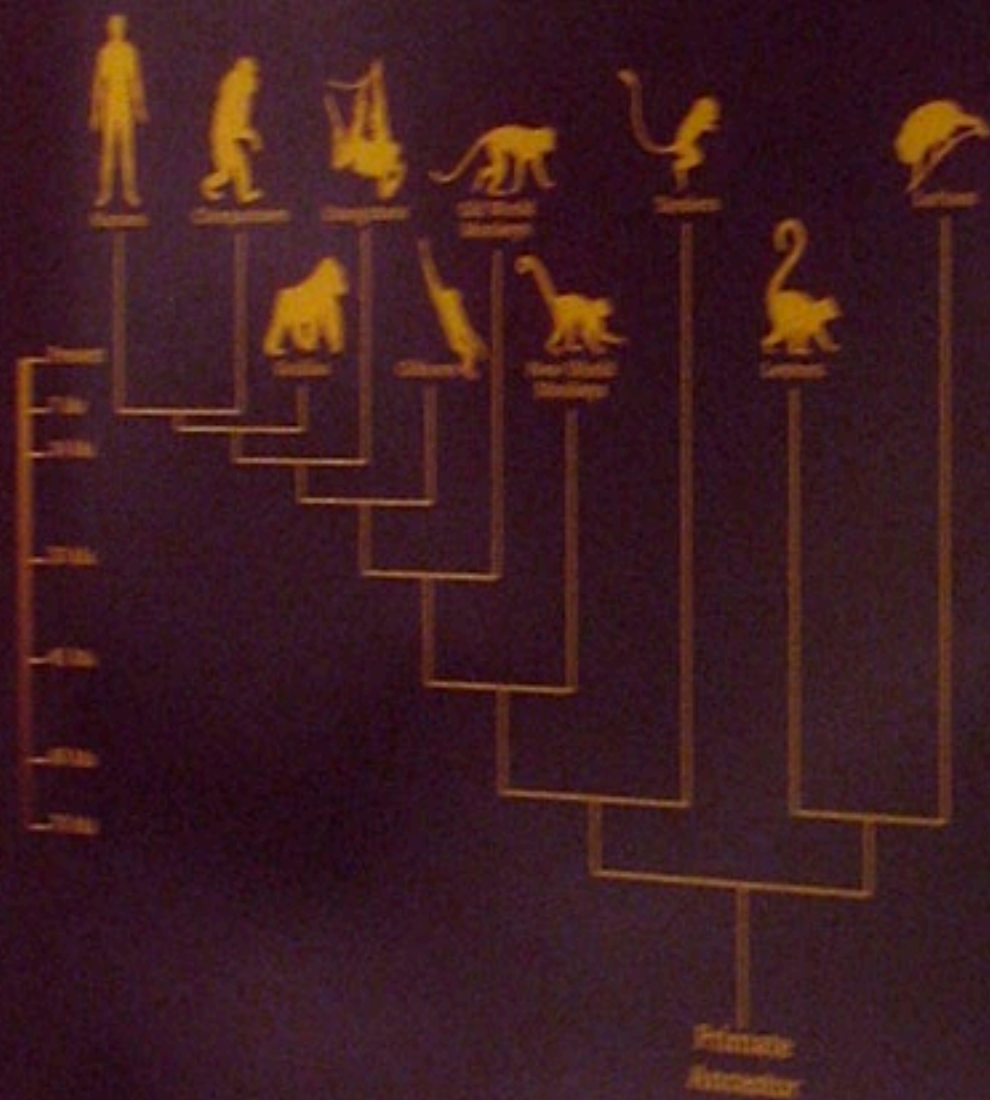


The Primates

A shared evolutionary history

Few animals on Earth hold as much fascination for people as do monkeys and apes. It is hardly surprising that we should feel a special affinity for these "cousins." They are our closest living relatives and their evolutionary story is, by in large, also our own. Humans, monkeys, and apes are all Primates, the order of mammals that also includes the smaller lemurs, lorises, and tarsiers.



Biologists are studying the physical, behavioral, and genetic characteristics of many different primates to gain a better understanding of their ancestry and evolution. This evolutionary tree diagram (at left) represents a current scientific hypothesis for how and when different groups of living primates evolved. This hypothesis may well change as biologists continue to uncover new fossil clues and probe an ever-expanding pool of genetic information.