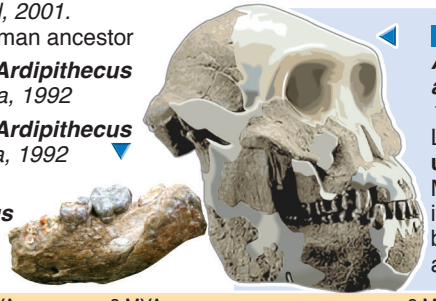
Milestones in human evolution

1 **7.2-6.9 million years ago (MYA):** ***Sahelanthropus tchadensis*** *Discovered Chad, 2001.* Oldest known human ancestor

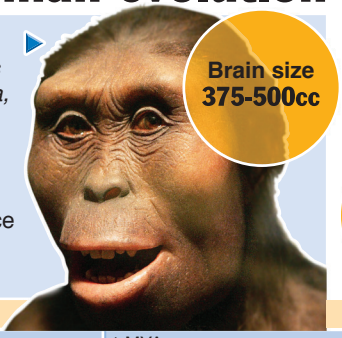
2 **5.8-5.2 MYA:** ***Ardipithecus kadabba*** *Ethiopia, 1992*

3 **4.4-4.2 MYA:** ***Ardipithecus ramidus*** *Ethiopia, 1992*

4 **4.2-3.9 MYA:** ***Australopithecus anamensis*** *Kenya, 1965*

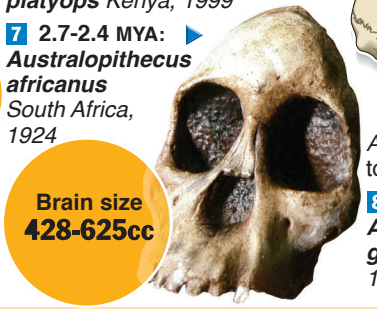


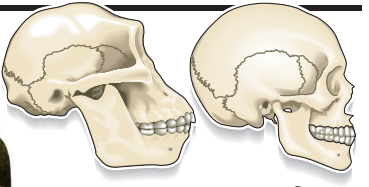
5 **3.9-2.9 MYA:** ***Australopithecus afarensis*** *Ethiopia, 1974.* Nicknamed Lucy. **Bipedal upright walk:** Marks single most important difference between humans and apes



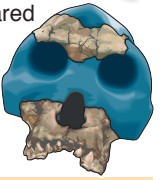
6 **3.5-3.2 MYA:** ***Kenyanthropus platyops*** *Kenya, 1999*

7 **2.7-2.4 MYA:** ***Australopithecus africanus*** *South Africa, 1924*



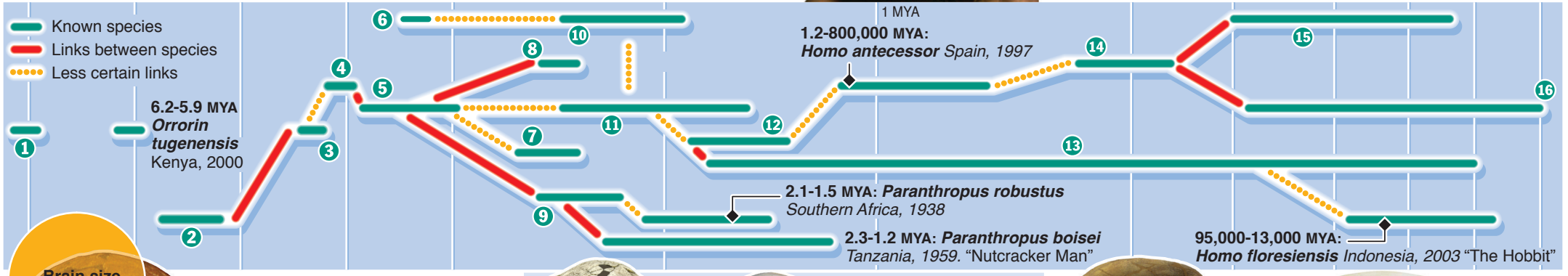


A. africanus compared to modern human



8 **2.6-2.4 MYA:** ***Australopithecus garhi*** *Ethiopia, 1999*

7 MYA | 6 MYA | 5 MYA | 4 MYA | 3 MYA | 2 MYA | 1 MYA | 500,000 years ago | 250,000 | 100,000 | 50,000 | 20,000 | Today



9 **2.6-2.2 MYA:** ***Paranthropus aethiopicus*** *Kenya, 1985*

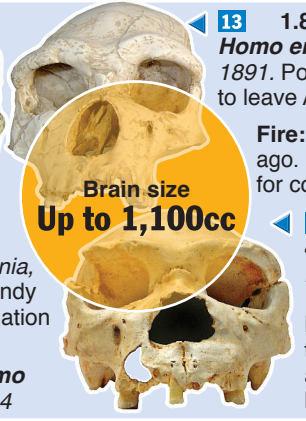
Paleolithic tools: Stone age tools start to appear 2.6 million years ago

Shrinking rain forests: Replacement of wooded, wetter environment with open grasslands triggers shift from trees to full-time life on ground

10 **2.5-1.9 MYA:** ***Homo rudolfensis*** *Kenya, 1972.* Brain has doubled in size with expansion of frontal lobes – area where humans make logical decisions

11 **2.5-1.6 MYA:** ***Homo habilis*** *Tanzania, 1962.* Nicknamed Handy Man due to its association with stone tools

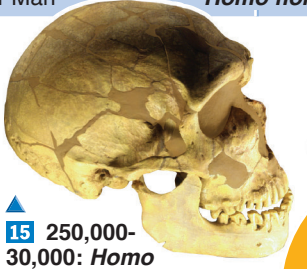
12 **1.9-1.4 MYA:** ***Homo ergaster*** *Kenya, 1984*



13 **1.8 MYA-20,000:** ***Homo erectus.*** *Indonesia, 1891.* Possibly first hominin to leave Africa

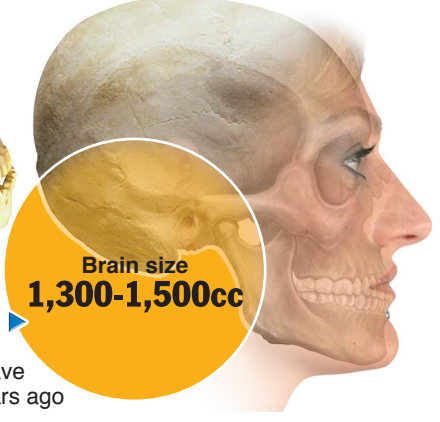
Fire: 790,000 years ago. Earliest evidence for controlled use of fire

14 **600,000-400,000:** ***Homo heidelbergensis*** *Germany, 1907.* May have buried their dead and acquired primitive language



15 **250,000-30,000:** ***Homo neanderthalensis*** *Belgium, 1829*

16 **230,000-today:** ***Homo sapiens*** *Ethiopia, 2003.* **Artistry:** Earliest known cave paintings dated 32,000 years ago



Sources: Nature, Science, Wellcome Trust, Jerusalem Institute of Archaeology, University of Maine, Pictures: Mission paléoanthropologique franco-tchadienne, Getty Images/Vilem Bischof/Tim Boyle/Gianluigi Guercia, San Diego Museum of Man

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