



Monkeys, Ahoy!

What are fossils?

- The only reason we know about animals from the past is because of fossils.
- Some fossils are imprints and others are stone replicas of skeletons.

Illustration: Scientists think monkeys travelled on rafts of plants.

Scientists Think Monkeys Sailed on Rafts

Fossilised monkey teeth, found in South America, have led scientists to an amazing discovery.

Roughly 34 million years ago, small monkeys sailed across the Atlantic Ocean from Africa to South America!

The teeth they found in South America were very similar to teeth from monkeys in northern Africa 23-56 million years ago.

This led the team to think about how they managed to travel all the way from Africa to South America.

So, how did the monkeys get there? They may have been washed out to sea on rafts made of plants, while clinging to trees during a storm.

Erik Seiffert, one of the scientists involved, said he had been **doubtful** at first when imagining monkeys crossing an ocean.

However, he changed his mind after seeing trees and bushes forming very large **rafts** on a river.

Professor Seifert said, "If a small primate

caught a ride on a raft like this, it seems very **plausible** that they could make it such a long distance."

The tiny monkeys would have weighed around 350 grams. This is roughly the same weight as a can of soft drink.

These brave little monkeys have been named *Ucayalipithecus perdita*. It is a mix of the place name where they were discovered, the Greek word for monkey and the Latin word for lost.

Glossary

fossilised	When the hard remains of a plant or animal are found in rock.
doubtful	When a person is unsure or uncertain about something.
rafts	Floating platforms.
plausible	Believable or likely to be true.

Questions

1. Tick whether each statement is true or false according to the article.

	True	False
Monkeys sailed from South America to Africa.		
The monkeys weighed about as much as a can of fizzy drink.		
The monkeys paddled across the ocean in tiny boats.		
Monkeys sailed from Africa to South America.		

2. How might the monkeys have ended up on a raft sailing across the Atlantic Ocean?

3. What caused the scientist, Erik Seiffert, to change his mind?

4. How do you think the scientists might have felt when they first came up with the idea that monkeys sailed from Africa to South America?

5. Why might the small size of the monkeys have made it easier for them to survive crossing the ocean?

6. 'The tiny monkeys would have weighed around 350 grams. This is roughly the same as a can of soft drink.' Which of the following definitions is closest in meaning to the word 'roughly'?

- ☐ to do something without care
☐ nearly or approximately
☐ exactly or perfectly.
☐ uneven, bumpy and not smooth

Answers

1. Tick whether each statement is true or false according to the article.

	True	False
Monkeys sailed from South America to Africa.		✓
The monkeys weighed about as much as a can of fizzy drink.	✓	
The monkeys paddled across the ocean in tiny boats.		✓
Monkeys sailed from Africa to South America.	✓	

2. How might the monkeys have ended up on a raft sailing across the Atlantic Ocean?
The monkeys may have been washed out to sea on rafts made of plants while clinging to trees during a storm.
3. What caused the scientist, Erik Seiffert, to change his mind?
He saw trees and bushes forming very large rafts on a river.
4. How do you think the scientists might have felt when they first came up with the idea that monkeys sailed from Africa to South America?
Accept any sensible answer referring to how unlikely it seemed, e.g. I think they might have been worried people wouldn't believe them.
5. Why might the small size of the monkeys have made it easier for them to survive crossing the ocean?
Accept and sensible answer that refers to the story, e.g. The tiny monkeys would have weighed around 350 grams. This is roughly the same weight as a can of soft drink.
6. 'The tiny monkeys would have weighed around 350 grams. This is roughly the same as a can of soft drink.' Which of the following definitions is closest in meaning to the word 'roughly'?
- ☐ to do something without care
 - ☒ **nearly or approximately**
 - ☐ exactly or perfectly
 - ☐ uneven, bumpy and not smooth.