

should represent, but Varmus almost certainly will put a scientist on COPR. Scientists "are one of our major constituencies," he said last week, and several panelists agreed. "I would like to see the scientific lion lie down with the public lamb," said Robert Abendroth of the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Foundation.

"Or vice versa," said Varmus.

—BRUCE AGNEW

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KENYA

## Leakey Back as Head of Wildlife Service

Politics has again created strange bedfellows in Kenya. Just a week after ousting conservationist David Western as head of the embattled Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), President Daniel arap Moi has reappointed one of his most prominent critics—anthropologist Richard Leakey—to the job of overseeing some of Africa's best known parks and protecting the country's rich biodiversity. The move comes just 4 years after Moi picked Western to replace Leakey, who resigned from the KWS in 1994 after complaining of political interference by Moi's cronies.

The latest switch, announced on 24 September, marks yet another twist in a political tale that has captivated and concerned conservationists around the world (*Science*, 25 September, p. 1931). In May, Moi fired Western, only to rehire him 6 days later following complaints from international donors and conservationists who supported Western's efforts to downsize the KWS and involve people living outside the agency's 53 parks in conservation. Some of Western's supporters charged that the ouster had been engineered by Leakey, who has been critical of Western's community-based wildlife policies and management style. At the time, Western himself ascribed the firing primarily to his opposition to granting mining concessions in the parks.

When Moi abruptly fired Western again on 17 September, few observers publicly predicted that the president would try to woo one of his leading opponents back into the government. In the past, Moi has reportedly called Leakey a "racist" and "arrogant" and

has threatened to have him arrested for sedition. And since January, Leakey has been a member of Parliament representing the Safina party, a small but vocal opposition group. On 24 September, however, Leakey announced he was reclaiming his old job after direct negotiations with Moi assured him that KWS would be insulated from political meddling. "I did due diligence and believe I have the government's commitment," Leakey told *Science*. "Obviously, one does not knowingly put his head in a noose," he commented at an earlier press conference.

Some observers say Leakey's reinstatement was primarily driven by Moi's increasingly frenetic efforts to shore up his sagging regime and Kenya's shattered economy. In particular, says Gilbert Khadiagala, a Kenyan who teaches African politics at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., Moi has sought to regain support among Kenya's powerful Kikuyu ethnic group as political parties begin talks over a new democratic constitution that could sharply curtail his Kanu party's power, and as the government negotiates an aid package with the International Monetary Fund. Last



Full circle. Richard Leakey gets old job back.

month Moi took one step toward that goal by politically rehabilitating Charles Njonjo, a Kikuyu elder statesman, by naming him chair of the KWS board of directors. Njonjo, whom Moi forced into internal exile in 1984, is Leakey's lifelong friend and mentor. One likely scenario, Khadiagala says, is that Moi brought Leakey into the government to provide Njonjo with a trusted ally and to demonstrate to foreign governments that he is ready to share power. "The appointment makes Moi look like a moderate, not an ethnic leader," Khadiagala says.

Kenyan politics aside, Western's supporters are concerned that Leakey—who focused on protecting animals within the parks during his first stint as KWS chief—will undo Western's community conservation programs, which attempt to preserve biodiversity in areas around the parks. "The worry is that Leakey will return to policies that are no longer supported by conservation science," says University of California, San Diego, biologist David Woodruff. Some donors also fear an abrupt shift. "There is quite a lot of donor concern," says a knowledgeable

source. Funders such as the European Union and Germany, which have pumped millions of dollars into the community projects and other reform efforts, "would like to be assured by the new management that major changes are not going to take place."

Leakey, who says he "can't imagine why donors should have any concern about changes," says his first priority will be to find funds to pay off a \$3.5 million deficit, caused largely by declining tourism and the end of some outside grants to KWS. "We simply don't have any incoming money to pay bills and salaries," he told *Science*. "We are going to have to cut costs."

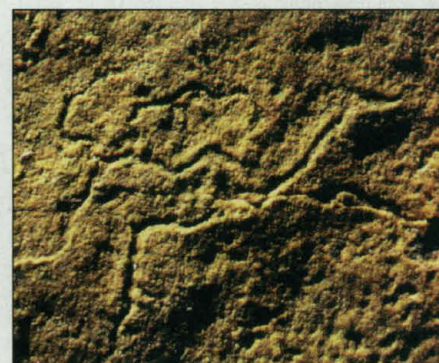
—DAVID MALAKOFF

PALEONTOLOGY

## Tracks of Billion-Year-Old Animals?

Could paleontologists have missed a third of the preserved history of animals? That's the implication of a startling claim on page 80. Researchers have grown accustomed to competing claims about when multicellular animals first appeared. In February, new fossil embryos from China pushed the date back tens of millions of years to just before 600 million years ago (*Science*, 6 February, p. 803), and some molecular biologists sorting through animals' genes have inferred an even earlier origin. Now the new find may extend the fossil record of animals more than 400 million years to 1.1 billion years ago, supporting the oldest molecular estimates of the origins of animals.

In this issue of *Science*, an international team of scientists argues that wiggly grooves on the surface of ancient sandstone from central India are the tracks of burrowing,



The first burrows? Half-centimeter-wide grooves in sandstone from India may push the origin of animals back almost half a billion years.