

also used the trees a great deal.”

Meanwhile, *K. wickeri* shows tantalizing similarities with modern apes. “We’re looking at *Equatorius* on one side of the divide and *wickeri* on the other,” says Ward. His team sees links in *K. wickeri* to Eurasian fossils, in particular, a still-unnamed 14-million-year-old ape found at a site called Paşalar in Turkey. That link may mean that *K. wickeri* was “a participant in the [early] radiation out of Africa,” says Ward.

This new view of *Kenyapithecus* has “very important implications for the whole picture of [ape] evolution,” says Carol Ward (no relation to Steve) of the University of Missouri, Columbia. Comparing two genera allows researchers to study the arrow of evolution from primitive to derived traits, she says.

But not everyone agrees with all of Steve Ward and colleagues’ interpretations. Begun, for example, thinks that *Equatorius*, rather than *Kenyapithecus*, may resemble the ancestral ape that migrated out of Africa. He is now preparing a report on a 16-million-year-old German fossil of an ape called *Griphopithecus*, which looks much like *Equatorius*. That would suggest that the first ape to migrate out of Africa was a much more primitive, earlier branch. “It’s really *Equatorius* that shows the earliest connection [to Europe],” argues Begun.

Meanwhile, the crucial question of which ape made it through the Miocene to give rise to the living great apes and humans remains a mystery. Indeed, by erasing *K. africanus*, Ward and his colleagues have reduced one contender, *Kenyapithecus*, to little more than the handful of teeth that Leakey found at Fort Ternan. “It’s tempting and tantalizing to think of *Kenyapithecus* as an early member within the great ape clade, but we really can’t say that at this point. The material at Fort Ternan is just too limited,” says Kelley. For that, paleontologists will have to wait for Kimeu or some other sharp-eyed fossil hunter to find more complete fossils, skeletons whose parts may eventually let them make sense of the whole. —CARL ZIMMER

Carl Zimmer is the author of *At the Water’s Edge*.

RESEARCH RISKS

California Probes Prison Teens Study

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA—A study in California of an antiviolence drug given to incarcerated teenagers, which was recently hailed as a model for work with such a rarely studied population, is now under attack for possibly violating laws to protect inmates involved in medical research. The investigation centers on whether the research met legal requirements that all inmates in a study

have a reasonable chance of benefiting from their participation.

In 1996 Stanford University psychiatrist Hans Steiner set out to measure whether divalproex sodium (Depakote), an antiepilepsy drug that is already widely used to treat violence in teenagers, is actually effective for that use. Steiner conducted the study at the O. H. Close Youth Correctional Facility in Stockton, where he has worked with youths for 15 years. Seventy teenaged boys whose aggressive violence fit a psychiatric condition called conduct disorder were divided into two groups and given different doses of the drug for 7 weeks. Steiner says boys in both groups showed a “reduction of distress” during the trial, and the high-dose group had a moderately increased ability to control violent urges. The study was funded by Abbott Laboratories and the California Youth Authority (CYA), which runs the facility.

Studies like Steiner’s, in which drugs are tested on teenaged inmates, are “very, very rare,” says Markus Kruesi, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at the Institute for Juvenile Research of the University of Illinois, Chicago. Kruesi hailed Steiner as a pioneer last fall when he introduced Steiner’s work at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists (AACAP) in Anaheim, California. Steiner says he hoped his presentation would encourage more colleagues to follow in his footsteps. “Child psychiatrists are remarkably absent in these institutions,” he says. “I think it’s a mistake.”

The still unpublished work caught the eye of new CYA director Greg Zermeño in March after Steiner applied to do a follow-up study on its long-term effects. Zermeño opened an investigation after declaring that there had been a breakdown in his office’s review process when the project was approved. Governor Gray Davis has ordered the state inspector general to investigate, and the CYA has asked the state attorney general’s office to help with its review. Kathy McClelland, Stanford’s research compliance director, says the study protocol was approved by the university’s institutional review board, and Stanford assumed that CYA had done its own review. Thomas Puglisi, director of human subject protection at the National Institutes of Health, says his office is following the progress of the state investigations but has no plans to do its own. Puglisi noted that Steiner appears to have gone beyond legal requirements for informed consent by obtaining parental approval and assigning advocates to the boys.

The controversy, first reported in the *Los Angeles Times* on 16 August, centers largely on the issue of whether subjects receiving the low dose could reasonably have

ScienceScope

Saber-Rattling In a move that one researcher calls a “crude attempt to intimidate,” an environmental group is warning British scientists and biotech executives that they could be personally liable for damages caused by genetically modified (GM) crops. Friends of the Earth (FOE) chief Charles Secrett last month sent letters to officials at more than 30 companies, research centers, and universities, warning that they could be “legally liable” for allergies or other problems caused by GM crops.

But in a public response, one of FOE’s targets last week said the threat is misdirected. Accusing the group of “deep ignorance,” Donald O’Nions, administrative head of the John Innes Centre in Norwich, said that his institute does basic research, not plant development.

Still, FOE believes that individual researchers “should not be able to hide behind a corporate veil,” says Secrett. Whether FOE can make good on its threat, however, is in doubt. In general, European laws do not hold employees personally liable for damages caused by their companies.

Testing, Testing The debate over animal testing in India took a new turn this week when a court gave permission for a biotech company to resume testing of its immune-system drug on a new batch of monkeys. The ruling comes 2 weeks after an earlier test was disrupted by the government-sanctioned release of 50 monkeys from a national facility that failed to meet new animal welfare rules (*Science*, 13 August, p. 997).

Shantha Biotechnics in Hyderabad claims it lost \$25 million due to the 9 August raid, which freed monkeys from the National Center for Laboratory Animal Sciences (NCLAS). The High Court of Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad has now ruled that the tests can resume with new animals—and “no interference” from animal welfare organizations.

Varaprasad Reddy, Shantha’s managing director, says he is “relieved and happy” with the order. But he says it fails to address a government split which pits the Animal Welfare Board against the Indian Council of Medical Research. And the Blue Cross Society, which was instrumental in the raid, says it is not opposed to testing if NCLAS improves living conditions for the monkeys.

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