

## RANDOM SAMPLES

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

### Ancient Bones Returned to Sod

To the dismay of many anthropologists, the bones of a teenage girl who died in Minnesota 7900 years ago—one of the oldest skeletons ever found in North America—have been returned to the earth. The girl's remains, as well as those of 8700-year-old Brown's Valley Man, were among the bones of 1070 "culturally unaffiliated" individuals that were turned over to Sioux Indians and quietly reburied in a mass grave in South Dakota last month.

The Sioux claimed the remains under a controversial 1986 law, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). "There's so much we could learn from [these remains]," says Douglas Owsley, a physical anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., who reported on the reburial at a



Minnesota girl, known as Pelican Rapids Woman, had 2-cm canines—outside the modern range.

meeting last month in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Owsley says the loss to science has occurred just when new techniques are coming on line to probe the origins of these ancient people who, like 9300-year-old Kennewick Man, scientists say bore no resem-

blance to living Indian tribes. The Minnesota girl, found in 1931, had a wide, short face, a narrow nose, and long teeth that are "unique in relation to modern populations," he says.

Anthropologists are worried that NAGPRA will be used to put more unaffiliated remains—such as two early Nevada skeletons, the Spirit Cave and Wizard's Beach men—back underground, says anthropologist Robson Bonnichsen of Oregon State University in Corvallis. Indeed, Owsley says the Minnesota case is now being used as a model for federal officials trying to puzzle out how to treat culturally unaffiliated remains under NAGPRA.

### The IQ Taboo

The link in the public's mind between eugenics and the horrific acts committed in its name during World War II has "contributed to making research on intelligence ... stigmatized to a degree not seen for scientific research on other natural phenomena, save perhaps for evolution as perceived by biblical fundamentalists."

—Controversial IQ researcher Arthur Jensen in the 1999 Galton Lecture, delivered at the Zoological Society of London in September

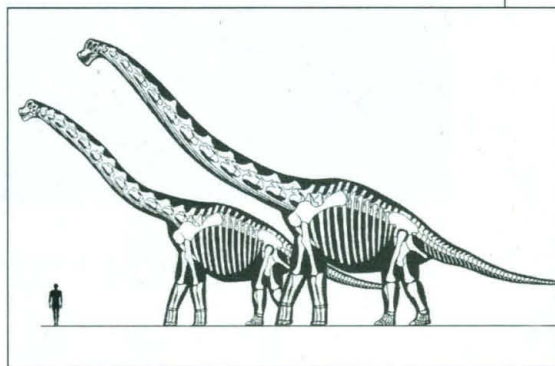
### Titan of the Cretaceous

From four dinosaur neck bones, scientists have reconstructed a tale of the terrible lizards' grand efflorescence: what they believe is the largest and longest necked creature ever to trudge

across Earth. The animal is a lizard-like sauropod whose remains were found in sediments, dated at 110 million years old, in southeastern Oklahoma in 1994. Dubbed *Sauroposeidon proteles* (proteles is Greek for "perfected before the end"), the critter lived in a surprisingly late era, when the Jurassic was already ancient history and dinos were dying out in the rest of North America.

With its remarkably light and porous bones, *Sauroposeidon* represented the last word in neck engineering, say scientists. The longest vertebra, believed to be C8, is 140 centimeters long—suggesting a

neck length of 10 meters and a body running 30 meters from head to tail. The animal probably stood at 18 meters, allowing it to browse the tops of pines and towering tree



Sketch of *Sauroposeidon* in relation to previous heavyweight champ, the brachiosaurus.

ferns, says paleontology grad student Mathew Wedel, who along with paleontologist Richard Cifelli and radiologist Kent Sanders of the University of Oklahoma, Norman, described the beast at last month's meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology in Denver. Their full report will appear in the March issue of the society's journal.

Hikers and overseas travelers quickly learn the gut-wrenching consequences of drinking unfiltered water. Now it appears that chimpanzees and baboons in Senegal catch on as well. Both primates dig holes in the sand near pools of stagnant water in riverbeds, allowing relatively clean water to well up from the water table. Researchers say this activity may one day join the growing list of culturally transmitted ape behaviors.

As rivers and streams disappear during the dry season in their woodland habitat, the animals ignore pools of standing water and instead dig new holes nearby. Anh Galat-Luong and Gérard Galat of the French Institute of Research for Development in Dakar reported last month at a meeting of the Francophone Society of Primatology in Paris. Their tests showed that the standing water was teeming with pathogens such as *Escherichia coli* and *Aeromonas hydrophila*, but the water in newly dug holes was clean. Digging for water in itself is not unusual, they say—but it hadn't been observed when surface water was available.

The scientists are hoping to determine if individuals each discover on their own the unpleasant effects of drinking stagnant water, or if they learn to dig fresh holes by watching other family members. Such observations would help researchers who are documenting primate "cultural" behaviors, such as nut cracking and ant fishing, that are passed on from one group member to another, says Christophe Boesch of the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig.

### A Taste for Perrier?