

New York Times April 6, 1974

## Startling Find in Africa

Associated Press – Ethiopia

A team of **archaeologists**, led by Donald Johanson, has made a startling discovery in the Afar region of Ethiopia. While **excavating** an area of the Rift Valley that was once an ancient forest, Johanson's team uncovered the **fossil** remains of what appears to be one of the earliest known **hominids**. While the excavation did not yield a complete skeleton, the archaeologists were able to piece together enough of the remains in order to get a good idea of what this individual might have looked like. According to Johanson, this particular individual was a female (who they have named Lucy) who probably stood about three and a half feet tall, walked up-right some of the time, and may have lived in small groups of 5 to 10 individuals. Johanson's team believes that this individual is part of a larger group known as **Australopithecines**, or Southern Apes, named for an area in Africa where they were first found. As Johanson explained, "as far as we can tell, Australopithecines were by nature, **scavengers**, since we have not found any stone tools with their remains, and the presence of the large **canine incisors** also tells us that they most likely did not have knowledge of fire for cooking the meat that they did scavenge". Preliminary tests have dated these remains at about 3.5 million years old. Johanson and his team plan to publish the full extent of their findings later this year.

### Vocabulary Word Bank

**Archaeologist:** scientist who studies the past through the things people leave behind.

**Excavation:** the systematic process of digging up items from the past.

**Hominid:** early human ancestors.

**Fossil:** the remains of something that was once alive.

**Australopithecines:** group of early hominids.

**Scavengers:** an animal or organism that eats the dead remains of other animals.

**Canine Incisors:** sharp pointed teeth used for tearing flesh (meat).



Use the area below to take notes on Australopithecines: