

Welcome to TimesPeople  
Get Started

 TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best of N'

Recommend

HOME PAGE MY TIMES TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS

Get Home Delivery Welcome, nataliewatson Member Center Log Out

The New York Times

# Magazine

Magazine  All NYT

Search

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

THE TIMES MAGAZINE T: STYLE KEY PLAY

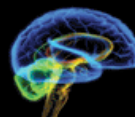


## HOW YOUR BRAIN WORKS!

Order Understanding the Brain on DVD

On Sale Now—Save up to 70%

Find Out More >>



Available on DVD!

Order Now

www.teach12.com

Feedback - Ads by Google

## Human-Chimp Hybrids

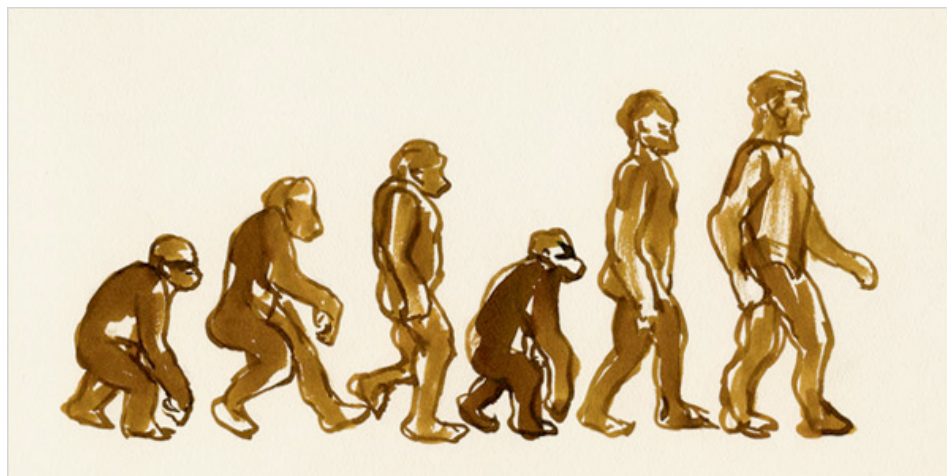


Illustration by Leanne Shapton

Human-chimp hybrids.

By STEPHEN MIHM  
Published: December 10, 2006

On hearing of Darwin's theories, the wife of the bishop of Worcester supposedly exclaimed: "Descended from apes? My dear, let us hope that it is not true." Now the geneticist David Reich of the Broad Institute at [Harvard](#) and [M.I.T.](#) has advanced a theory that the bishop's wife would have found even more disturbing: human and chimp ancestors, after diverging into separate species millions of years ago, came back together and interbred.

Reich came up with the idea after comparing the genes of humans and chimps. When two species split from a common ancestor, their genes will continue to diverge, or mutate, at a regular clip over time. Reich and his team of researchers, after comparing some 20 million base pairs (the "rungs" of DNA) from humans and chimps, found that different genes began diverging at different times — with genes located on the X chromosome of humans and chimps parting ways most recently.

Reich's explanation is that the two populations interbred on repeated occasions over hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of years, producing hybrids of protohumans and protochimps. The male hybrids were likely to be sterile, but Reich posits that the female hybrids (with their two X chromosomes) were able to mate with males of one of the

E-MAIL

PRINT

ARTICLE TOOLS  
SPONSORED BY



[More Articles in Magazine »](#)

### Movies Update E-Mail



Sign up for the latest movie news and reviews, sent every Friday. See [Sample](#)

[nwatson@genetics.med.harvard.e...](mailto:nwatson@genetics.med.harvard.e...)

Sign Up

[Change E-mail Address](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)



**K&N AIR INTAKE**

2003-2007 Chrysler PT Cruiser 2.4L Turbo

**12 MORE HP!**

Find Your Vehicle's HP Gain Here!

### MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

1. Nuns in the U.S. Are Facing Scrutiny by the Vatican
2. The Perfect Burger and All Its Parts
3. Aspiring Lawyer Finds Debt Is Bigger Hurdle Than Bar Exam
4. Op-Ed Contributor: The Patients Doctors Don't Know
5. Op-Ed Contributors: Our True North
6. Well: Is Bicycling Bad For Your Bones?
7. Maureen Dowd: Rules of the Wronged
8. Nicholas D. Kristof: When Our Brains Short-Circuit
9. Room for Debate: What Is a Master's Degree Worth?
10. Panel Recommends Ban on 2 Popular Painkillers

[Go to Complete List »](#)

... (from the Y chromosome), were able to make their males of one of the original species. This would explain why genes on the X chromosome of humans and chimps diverged more recently.

It's a radical concept. Conventional wisdom holds that the development of separate species happens quickly, most often when populations become separated by a geographical barrier. Even if these groups meet again and manage to mate before diverging too far from one another, their offspring will be unfit and die out. Or so the thinking goes.

By contrast, Reich argues that hybrids could play an important and positive role in speciation, introducing advantageous traits into a gene pool — including ours. If Reich is correct, the customary image of the human family tree, with its neat and discrete divisions, should be replaced by another metaphor: a dense and impenetrable thicket of branches concealing countless acts of interspecies sex. It's enough to make a bishop's wife blush.

[Sign in to Recommend](#)

[More Articles in Magazine »](#)



[Click here to enjoy the convenience of home delivery of The Times for 50% off.](#)



### Men's Fashion Week in Milan

ALSO IN T MAGAZINE »

[Bathroom reading](#)  
[Good dive bar needed](#)

[nytimes.com](#)

MAGAZINE

#### ADVERTISEMENTS



The New York Times  
**The Weekender**  
Save 50% [▶ GO](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

#### [Human Hair Extensions Brown](#)

Get Longer & Thicker Natural Hair Free Consult From A Professional!  
[www.NoelleSalon.com/](#)

#### [Human Resources Degrees](#)

Get your degree in Human Resources Management  
[ww.Online-Education.net](#)

#### [Human Resources Jobs](#)

Accelerate Your Human Resources Job Hunt by Networking on PartnerUp.  
[www.PartnerUp.com](#)

#### Tips

To find reference information about the words used in this article, hold down the ALT key and click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

#### Related Articles

- [Two Splits Between Human and Chimp Lines Suggested](#) (May 18, 2006)
- [In Chimpanzee DNA, Signs of Y Chromosome's Evolution](#) (September 1, 2005)
- [Human Brain Design Gets a New Timetable](#) (January 25, 2005)
- [OBSERVATORY](#) (December 14, 2004)

#### Related Searches

- [Genetics and Heredity](#)
- [Monkeys and Apes](#)

#### INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



[HOME & GARDEN »](#)

[TRAVEL »](#)

[OPINION »](#)

[ARTS »](#)

[OPINION »](#)

[FASHION & STYLE »](#)