



Scientists Say Monkeys Sailed to South America

How did monkeys travel to South America from Africa?

- 34 million years ago, the closest points of Africa and South America were only about 900 miles apart.
- Scientists believe the monkeys could have sailed across the Atlantic Ocean on rafts made of vegetation.

Fossilised monkey teeth, found in Peru, have led scientists to a most remarkable discovery. They think these creatures sailed across the Atlantic Ocean, from Africa to South America, 34 million years ago!

Scientists from the University of Southern California, USA, discovered the teeth while in the Peruvian Amazon, on the west coast of South America.

The teeth they unearthed were very similar to teeth found from monkeys in northern Africa that lived 23-56 million years ago. But, how did the monkeys get to South America? This is when the team started to have an idea.

One of the scientists, Professor Erik Seiffert, said he had been **doubtful** at first. After seeing very large chunks of trees and bushes forming rafts on a river, he began to **reconsider**.

"If a small primate caught a ride on a raft like this, it seems very plausible that they could make it such a long distance," said Professor Seiffert.

The tiny monkeys would have weighed around 350 grams. This is roughly the same weight as a can of soft drink. They may have been washed out to sea on rafts made of **vegetation**, while clinging to trees during a storm.

The journey across the Atlantic would have been **perilous** and long. However, it would be a much longer crossing if any monkeys were

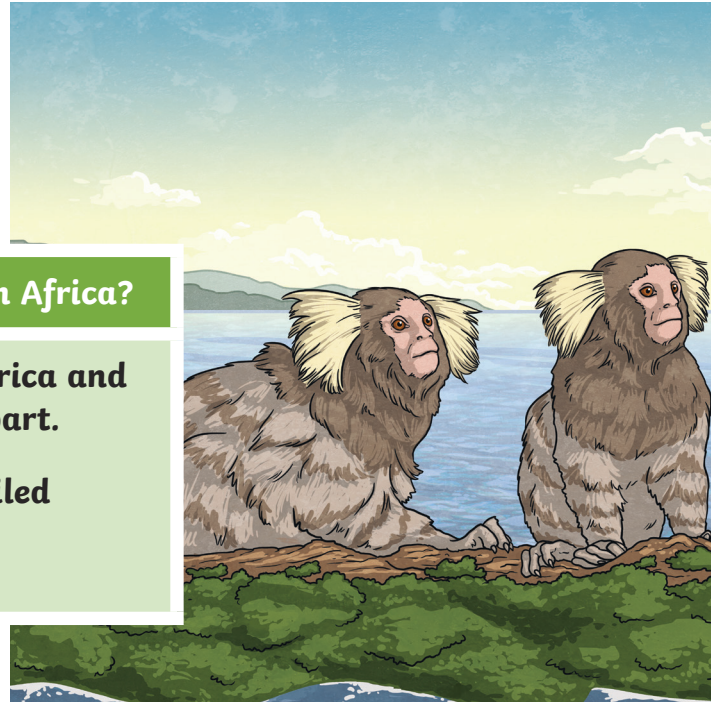


Illustration: Monkeys could have sailed on rafts.

to try it again today. 34 million years ago, the closest points of Africa and South America were about 900 miles apart. Continental drift has meant that Africa and South America have moved farther away. The closest points today are around 1800 miles apart.

These brave little monkeys have been named *Ucayalipithecus perdita*. Their name is a mixture of three things: the place name where they were discovered; the Greek word for monkey; and the Latin word for lost.

Glossary

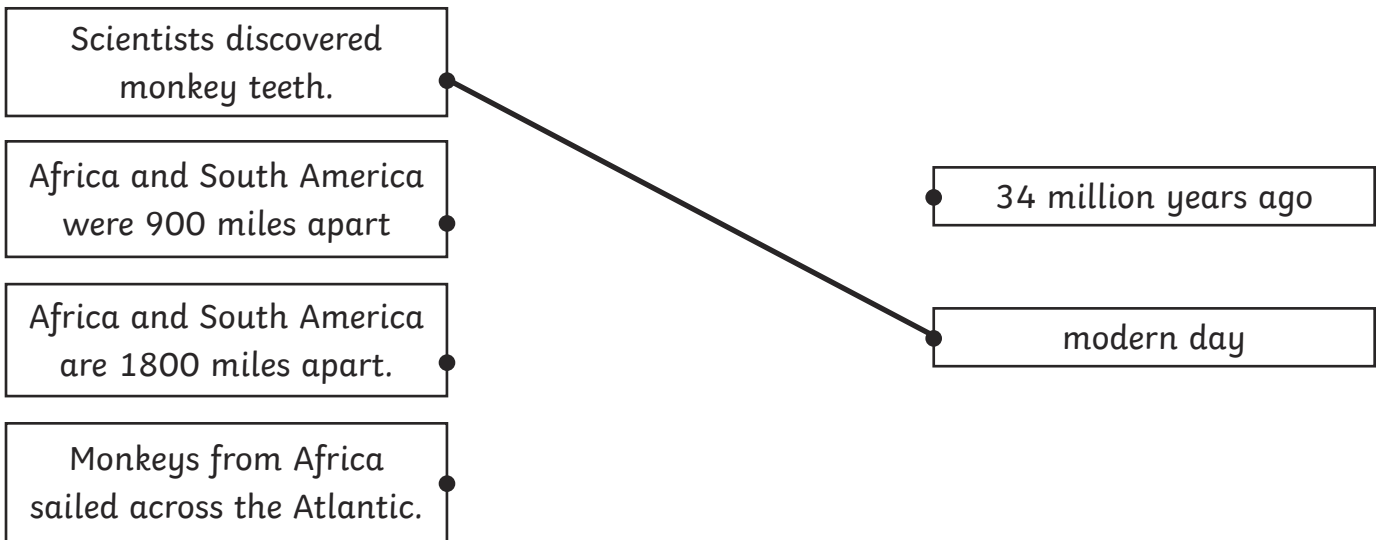
doubtful	When a person is unsure or uncertain about something.
reconsider	To consider again and change your mind.
vegetation	All the plants or plant life of a place.
perilous	Something that involves great risk or danger.

Questions

1. Tick whether each statement is true or false according to the article.

	True	False
Monkeys sailed from South America to Africa.		
The monkeys weighed about as much as a can of fizzy drink.		
Africa and South America are around 2800 miles apart.		
Monkeys sailed from Africa to South America.		

2. Draw a line to show when the event happened. One has been done for you.



3. Why do you think the professor was doubtful at first?

4. Look at the paragraph beginning 'If a small primate', find and copy a word that means likely.

5. What event caused Professor Erik Seiffert to change his mind?

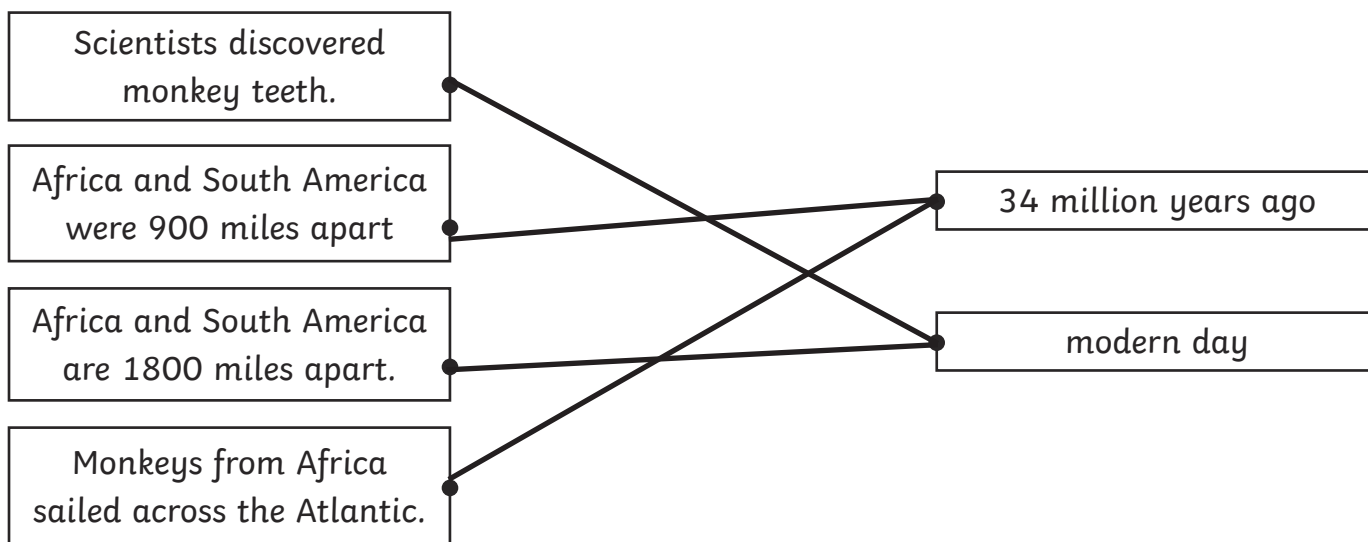
6. Explain what this article is about in 20 words or fewer.

Answers

1. Tick whether each statement is true or false according to the article.

	True	False
Monkeys sailed from South America to Africa.		✓
The monkeys weighed about as much as a can of fizzy drink.	✓	
Africa and South America are around 2800 miles apart.		✓
Monkeys sailed from Africa to South America.	✓	

2. Draw a line to show when the event happened. One has been done for you.



3. Why do you think the professor was doubtful at first?
Accept any answer which refers to the story, e.g. I think he was doubtful at first because it didn't seem likely.
4. Look at the paragraph beginning 'If a small primate', find and copy a word that means 'likely'.
plausible
5. What event caused Professor Erik Seiffert to change his mind?
He saw very large chunks of trees and bushes forming rafts on a river.
6. Explain what this article is about in 20 words or fewer.
Accept any reasonable summary that is 20 words or fewer, e.g. Scientists have found fossilised teeth of monkeys in South America. They believe the monkeys sailed there from Africa.