



PALEONTOLOGY DIVISION TALK

in conjunction with the Alberta Palaeontological Society

The REACHE Project: Fossil Apes and Environments in Eastern Africa

Speaker: Susan Cote | Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Calgary

September 18, 2020 | 7:30 pm MDT

Webinar, there will not be a meeting at Mount Royal University, Room B108 in September

1 CPD (Continuing Professional Development) credit will be awarded for this event

ABSTRACT

The early Miocene (23 – 16 Ma) of eastern Africa has a rich fossil record that documents the evolution of the earliest monkeys and apes. Beginning in 2012, a consortium of researchers came together to form the REACHE Project (Researching East African Catarrhine and Hominoid Origins). With funding from the US National Science Foundation, we embarked on an ambitious program of field, museum, and laboratory research at five major Miocene fossil sites across Kenya and Uganda. To date, we have recovered thousands of new fossils, including several important new ape fossils that better document the diversity and adaptations of the early ape radiation. Another major focus has been on reconstructing environments using multi-proxy approaches led by paleontologists, paleobotanists, and geologists. In today's talk, I'll briefly review our progress to date, highlighting important new fossil specimens and key environmental findings. Our results demonstrate that the earliest apes did not inhabit dense tropical forests, but instead were able to thrive in many habitat types. In some ways, the broad environmental tolerances of our early ape ancestors foreshadow the extreme adaptability of the human lineage.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Susanne Cote is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Calgary. Susanne conducts research in the field and at museums in Kenya and Uganda, where she has worked since 2001. The fundamental questions that drive her research are understanding how apes have evolved and how broader environmental and community-level changes have impacted ape evolution. To address these questions, Susanne conducts fieldwork in the Turkana Basin and northeastern Uganda and studies existing fossil collections of apes and other mammals from across eastern Africa. She received her PhD from Harvard University and her undergraduate degree from McGill University. Susanne is originally from Winnipeg.

This event is presented jointly by the Alberta Palaeontological Society, the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Mount Royal University, and the Palaeontology Division of the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists. For details or to present a talk in the future, please contact CSPG Palaeontology Division Chair Jon Noad at jonnoad@hotmail.com or APS Coordinator Harold Whittaker at 403-286-0349 or contact programs1@albertapaleo.org. Visit the APS website for confirmation of event times and upcoming speakers: <http://www.albertapaleo.org/>.