

‘Hobbits’ just fantasy: skeleton was human with Down syndrome, not new species

Skeletal remains found in 2004 in a cave on the island of Flores in Indonesia were not proof of a new species of “hobbit” human, but instead showed signs of Down syndrome, argues a new study.

The initial analysis of the skull (called LB1) suggested a brain that was 1/3 the size of the average modern humans, and a small stature — just about 3 1/2 feet tall. The skull was dated to 15,000 years ago, and considered a distinct species — *Homo floresiensis*. (See a [3D image of the skull](#)).

But a reanalysis by an international team finds that initial estimates were “markedly lower than any later attempts to confirm them,” the study’s authors say.

“The difference is significant, and the revised figure falls in the range predicted for a modern human with Down syndrome from the same geographic region,” Robert B. Eckhardt, professor of developmental genetics and evolution at Penn State, said in a statement.

“The skeletal sample from Liang Bua cave contains fragmentary remains of several individuals,” Eckhardt said. “LB1 has the only skull and thigh bones in the entire sample.”

Eckhardt, along with his colleagues — Maciej Henneberg, professor of anatomy and pathology at the University of Adelaide, and Kenneth Hsü, a Chinese geologist and paleoclimatologist — say the skull is from an abnormally developed human.

Read the full, original story: ‘Hobbit’ human had Down Syndrome