

Discovered ancient footprints hint males had multiple “wives”

Laetoli in northern Tanzania is the site of iconic ancient footprints, capturing the moment – 3.66 million years ago – when three members of [Lucy’s species \(*Australopithecus afarensis*\)](#) strode out across the landscape.

Now something quite unexpected has come to light: the footprints of two other individuals.

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It has been all too tempting to interpret the original trackways – often reconstructed as belonging to two adults and one juvenile – as evidence of a [prehistoric “nuclear family”](#).

The new footprints show more adults were present...That has spawned a new hypothesis about australopith social groups.

“They were probably similar in certain respects to those of our cousins, the gorillas, with a single dominant big male accompanied by his females and their offspring,” says Giorgio Manzi at the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy....

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The new footprints find could also help us determine if the australopiths walked like us, a controversial issue. Some researchers...say the depth profiles of the prints show clearly that [australopiths walked in a broadly modern way](#)...[while others] concluded that the australopith gait might have looked a little strange to modern eyes....

Footprints photographed at sunset at laetoli site s credit raffaello pellizzon x
Footprints photographed at the Laetoli site. Credit: Raffaello
Pellizzon

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Oldest early human footprints suggest males had several ‘wives’](#)