

'Remarkable' love child: Here's what happened when a Neanderthal met a Denisovan

In a remarkable twist in the story line of early human evolution, scientists have announced the discovery of "Denisova 11"—a female who was at least 13 years old, lived more than 50,000 years ago and was a child of mixed parentage. Her parents were not just of different races, but two different and now-extinct early human types. Their exact taxonomic designations—whether they were separate species or subspecies—is still a matter of scientific debate. But the bottom line for Denisova 11 is that mom was a Neanderthal and dad a Denisovan.

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Molecular dating indicates that Denisovans, who are so far known only from Denisova Cave, and Neandertals, known mainly from sites in Europe, diverged from each other almost 400,000 years ago. They coexisted, probably in relatively small populations scattered across the vast Eurasian landmass, until both became extinct some 30,000 to 40,000 years ago.

But the genetic evidence from Denisova 11 and other recent studies suggests that, on the occasions when they met, Denisovans and Neandertals commonly mated with each other—and with modern humans.

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The hybrid offspring from such divergent populations, [geneticist David] Reich says, may have experienced biological problems.

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The dream that scientists could document such interactions in the prehistory of humankind "used to seem impossible," Reich says. "But now we are getting to witness the dream."

Read full, original post: [When a Neanderthal Met a Denisovan, What Happened Was Only Human](#)