



### **The Mystery of Our Human Story**

Lee Berger: Paleoanthropologist

**March 30, 2017 | 11:15am |**

**Suggested grades: 5-12**

It is no exaggeration to say that paleoanthropologist Lee Berger's 2013 discovery of Homo naledi signaled a profound shift in our understanding of human evolution. In a secret chamber of the remote Rising Star cave system near Johannesburg, South Africa, a massive collection of bones was discovered by his explorers assisted by recreational cavers. He rapidly assembled a team of "underground astronauts" with caving experience, scientific backgrounds, and the kind of physique that could fit in a chute averaging 7.9 inches in width. Their headline-making discovery suggested something unprecedented – and that was just the beginning.

**Home page of Professor Lee R. Berger**

<http://profleeberger.com/>

Gladysvale, South Africa: <http://profleeberger.com/Gladysvale1.html>

While a graduate student, this 1991 re-discovery of hominin fossils at Gladysvale led to a greater understanding of methods of scientific excavation that best work in South Africa. Website includes a 3D reconstruction of the underground cave, photos and publications.

**Arizona State University – Ask An Anthropologist**

<https://askananthropologist.asu.edu/famous-anthropology-finds>

Educator page – activities, teachers toolbox, quizzes, stories, vocab list, ask a question. Sortable.

<https://askananthropologist.asu.edu/activities>

**Arizona State University – Institute of Human Origins**

<https://iho.asu.edu/about>

Includes Lucy's Story.

Articles about Lee Berger

***Digging for Glory*** – 6/27/2016 article from The New Yorker.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/06/27/lee-berger-digs-for-bones-and-glory>

Lee Berger has announced one fossil find after another, and has proclaimed two new species of ancestral human. Do the bones live up to the hype? By Paige Williams

***New human species discovered***

<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/09/new-human-species-discovered>

9/10/2015 – Article from Science by Ann Gibbons

Includes diagram of the Rising Star cave.

Videos

## **Lee Berger: “Google Earth and Human Evolution” | Talks at Google**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHpEmD-95CQ>

Published on Nov 22, 2012

“In 2008, Professor Lee Berger--with the help of his curious 9-year-old son--discovered two remarkably well preserved, two-million-year-old fossils of an adult female and young male, known as Australopithecus sediba; a previously unknown species of ape-like creatures that may have been a direct ancestor of modern humans. This discovery of has been hailed as one of the most important archaeological discoveries in history. The fossils reveal what may be one of humankind's oldest ancestors.” (first paragraph)

## **Into the Underworld – National Geographic Explorers Symposium 2016**

<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/160617-explorers-week-into-underworld-panel>

Meet four fascinating “underground” scientists

Lee Berger, Paleoanthropologist, Explorer-in-Residence

Marina Elliott, Biological Anthropologist, 2016 Emerging Explorer

Guillermo de Anda, Underwater Archaeologist, 2012 Emerging Explorer

Genevieve von Petzinger, Paleoanthropologist, 2016 Emerging Explorer

This panel was part of National Geographic's 2016 Explorers Week, an annual event at which some of the world's most innovative explorers and scientists come together at National Geographic headquarters. Learn more about Explorers Week at [NatGeo.org/explore](http://NatGeo.org/explore). (about an hour and a half. Berger is the first speaker.

## **First Look Inside a Fossil Cave**

<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/news/berger-cavers-vin>

Go inside the cave system where researchers have been working to retrieve ancient hominid bones.

Steve Tucker and Rick Hunter are the cavers who spotted the remains initially. The two friends were out exploring for fun a few weeks ago, when they squeezed down a 20-meter vertical crack and saw bones—the kinds of fossils local paleoanthropologist and National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Lee Berger had asked their caving club to keep an eye out for.