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ALTERNATIVE VIEWS ON THE ORIGIN AND EARLY EVOLUTION OF PRIMATES

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Current theories of the time and place of primate origins, the evolution of clade-defining characteristics, and the order's dissemination across the globe, have come under increasing scrutiny as a result of new fossil and genetic evidence, new methods of analysis, and interpretations of the earth's evolution. Molecular estimates of the age of primates are far older than paleontological evidence indicates, and these different reconstructions carry different implications for the paleoclimatic and geological circumstances surrounding the emergence of the primate clade. Recently recovered fossils, phylogenetic analyses, and the comparative method provide interpretations of ancestral primate characteristics that differ from commonly accepted scenarios for the adaptive context of primate origins. Comparative studies indicate that body size, daily activity rhythms, and social systems evolve too rapidly to permit simplistic evolutionary reconstructions of ancestral primates.

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