

Scientists redate Neanderthal fossils

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Scientists say two Neanderthal fossils excavated from Vindija Cave in Croatia in 1998 may be 3,000-4,000 years older than originally thought.

An international team of researchers says the two Neanderthals are between 32,000 and 33,000 years old and perhaps slightly older.

In 1998, the fossils had been radiocarbon dated to 28,000-29,000 years ago.

Since that time, however, the increasing application of direct radiocarbon dating to late Neanderthal and early modern human fossils in Europe has greatly altered perceptions of the chronological relationships between Neanderthals and modern humans during the time that the latter spread westward across Europe, the study in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* said.

Refinements in the sample purification techniques for the radiocarbon dating bone and teeth are also helping to provide more accurate dates for important fossil specimens.

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