

The Flores Hobbit's face revealed

December 10 2012, by Sunanda Creagh



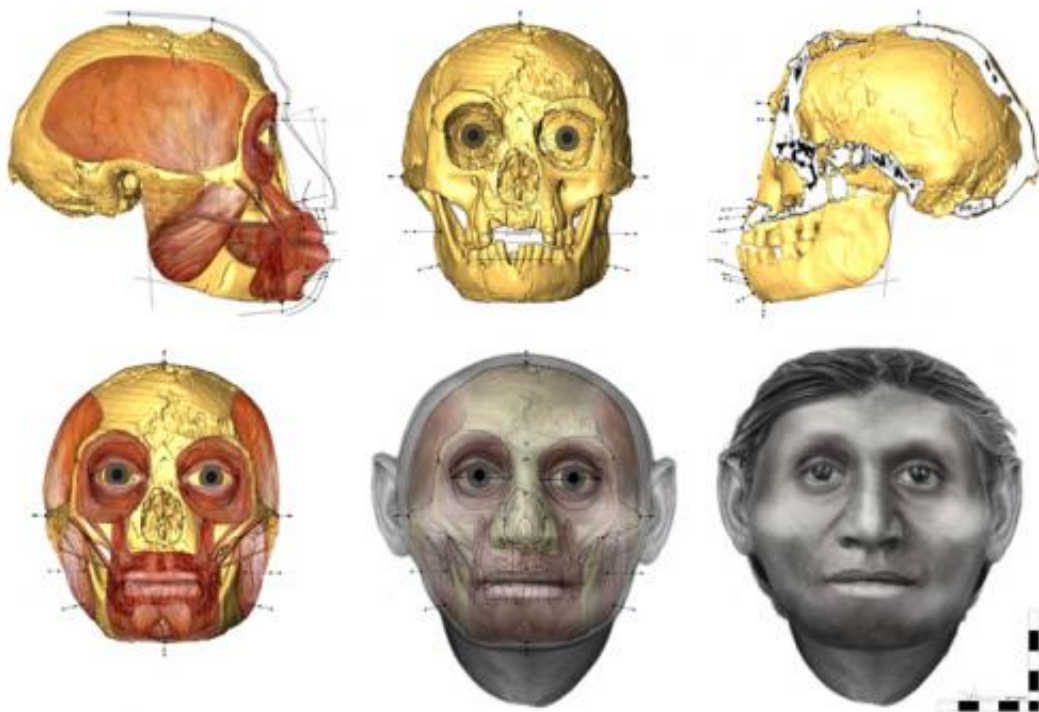
The hobbit's face, according to a forensic facial approximation. Credit: University of Wollongong

An Australian anthropologist has used forensic facial reconstruction techniques to show, for the first time, how the mysterious Flores 'hobbit' might have once looked.

[Homo floresiensis](#), as the hobbit is officially known, caused a storm of controversy when it was discovered in Flores, Indonesia in 2003. Some argued the hobbit was an entirely new species, while others suggested it may have simply been a diseased specimen of an existing [human species](#).

Using techniques she has previously applied to help police solve crimes, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Wollongong and specialist facial [anthropologist](#), Dr Susan Hayes, moulded muscle and fat around a model of the hobbit's skull to flesh out her face.

The results show a surprisingly familiar face, with high cheekbones, long ears and a broad nose.



Forensic facial approximation methods helped give an idea of how the muscle and fat intersected with the hobbit's skull. Credit: University of Wollongong

"She's not what you'd call pretty, but she is definitely distinctive," Dr Hayes said in a statement.

"She's taken me a bit longer than I'd anticipated, has caused more than a

few headaches along the way, but I'm pleased with both the methodological development and the final results."

Darren Curnoe, a [human evolution](#) specialist at the University of [New South Wales](#), said the face looked more modern than he expected.

"The bones are really quite primitive looking and look a bit like pre-humans that lived two or three million years ago but this new construction looks, to me, surprisingly modern," he said.

"I think it's really interesting to see a new approach founded in [forensic science](#) and it can actually progress the ways we can understand what [Homo floresiensis](#) looked like. What we have seen, until now, have been artistic interpretations, very beautiful ones, but I think this really takes it to a new level and gives us a more scientific and accurate view of what the hobbit looked like."

Dr Curnoe said that now the majority of researchers accepted that the hobbit was unique and not a diseased human.

"But precisely where it fits in the human evolutionary tree is still to be determined."

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Source: The Conversation

Citation: The Flores Hobbit's face revealed (2012, December 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-flores-hobbit-revealed.html>

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