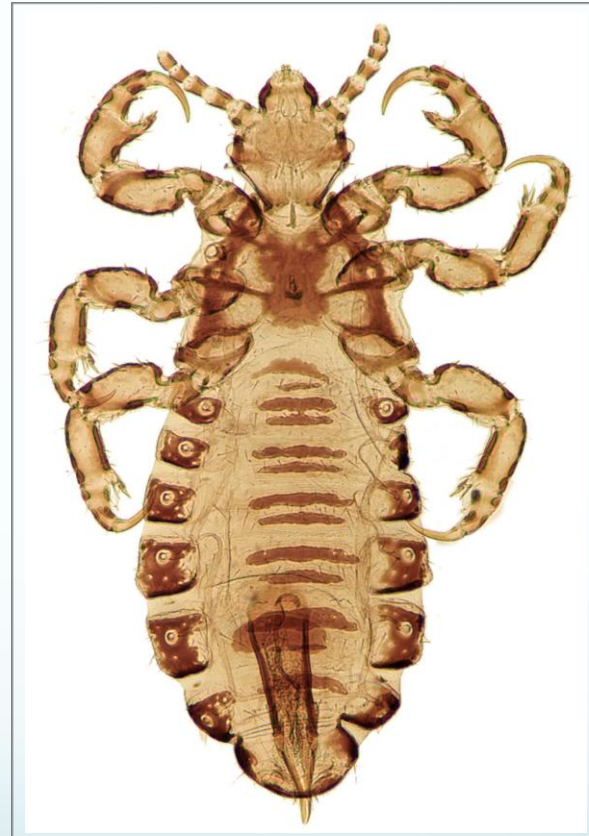


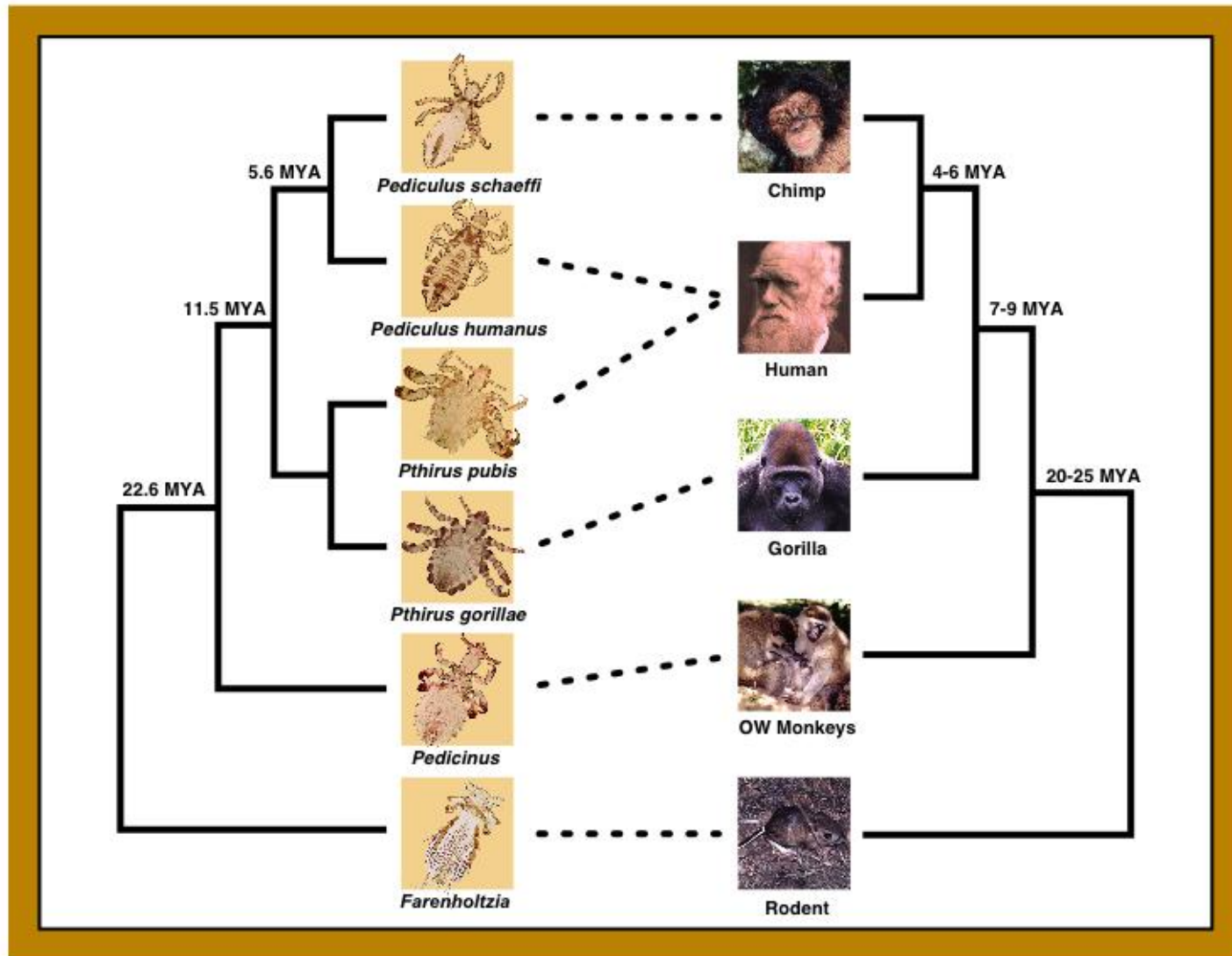
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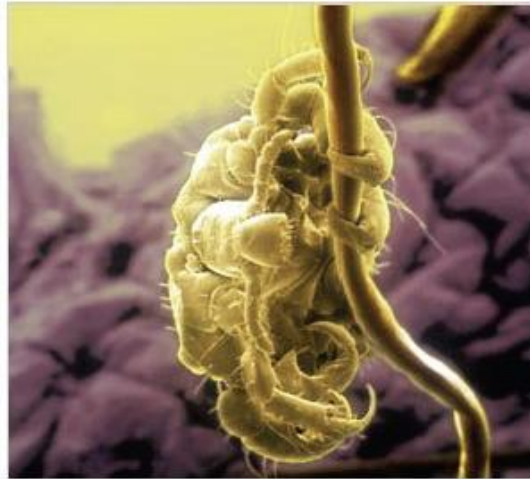


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In Lice, Clues to Human Origin and Attire



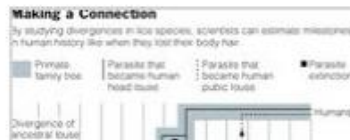
Left, The Natural History Museum, London; right, Mona Lisa Productions/Photo Researchers

Scientists believe they have figured out how and why the human pubic louse, right, and the gorilla louse, left, diverged 3.3 million years ago.

By **NICHOLAS WADE**
Published: March 8, 2007

One of the more embarrassing mysteries of human evolution is that people are host to no fewer than three kinds of louse while most species have just one.

Multimedia



Even bleaker for the human reputation, the pubic louse, which gets its dates and residence-swapping opportunities when its hosts are locked in intimate embrace, does not seem to be a true native of the human body. Its closest relative is the gorilla louse.

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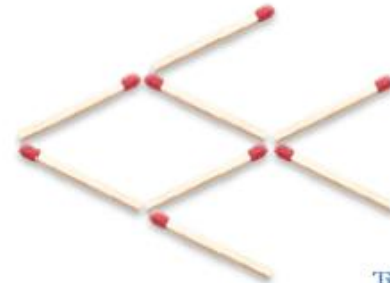
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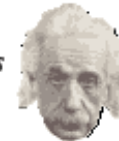
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The Coevolution of Lice & Their Hosts

Posted by samzenpus on Wednesday March 07, @10:43PM
from the lets-be-adults-about-this-everyone dept.

[eldavojohn](#) writes "*It might be an uncomfortable subject but [parasites are an interesting subject when it comes to evolution](#). Ever wonder if pocket gophers have lice? Well, they do. And most interesting of all is the evolution of these lice mirroring the evolution of gophers. To study the genes of lice may shed just as much light on evolutionary trees as studying the genes of the actual host the lice has evolved to. The most unsettling result from these studies is that human head lice and human pubic lice (crabs) vary so greatly that they are in two separate genera. There were similarities between our pubic lice and the lice found on gorillas. Scientists came to the conclusion, which they published today in *BMC Biology*, is just as striking as their earlier one about head lice. But it is hardly the same. We did not get pubic lice from other hominids. We got them from the ancestors of gorillas.*"



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