



Topography of Teeth: Smithsonian Scientist Strengthens Tools To Track Animal, Ecosystem Responses to Major Environmental Changes

Analysis of Diet, Teeth of Modern Mammals Opens Windows Into Life's Past and Future

November 21, 2016 • News Release

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By charting the slopes and crags on animals’ teeth as if they were mountain ranges, scientists at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History have created a powerful new way to learn about the diets of extinct animals from the fossil record.

Media Only
Randall Kremer
(202) 633-0817
kremerr@si.edu

Ryan Lavery
(202) 633-0826
laveryr@si.edu

National Museum of Natural History

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Understanding the diets of animals that lived long ago can tell researchers about the environments they lived in and help them piece together a picture of how the planet has changed over deep time. The new quantitative approach to analyzing dentition, reported Nov. 21 in the journal *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, will also give researchers a clearer picture of how animals evolve in response to changes in their environment.

“The new method gives researchers a way to measure changes that occur as animals

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Silvia Pineda-Munoz, Smithsonian

Topography of Teeth

These laser-scanned digital maps of a gorilla's teeth visualize shape, orientation and s

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