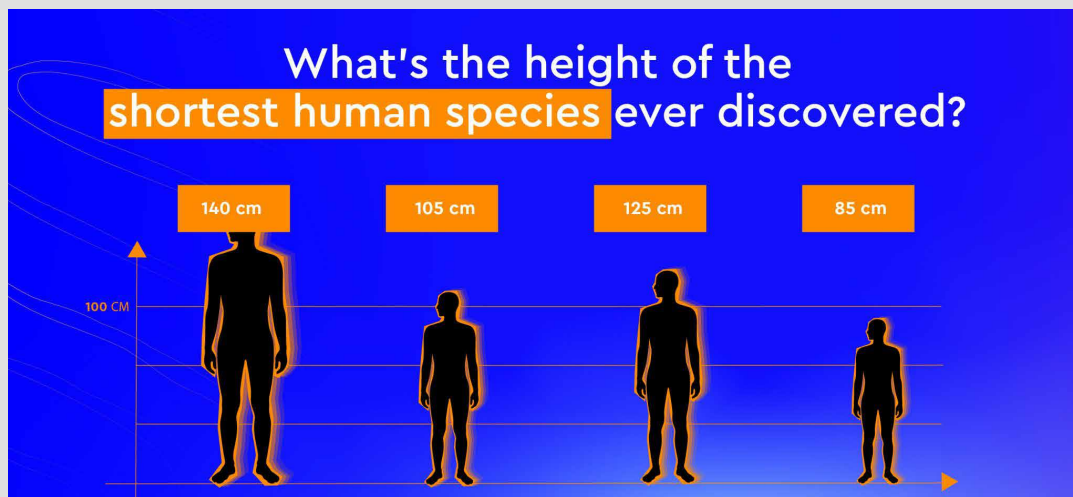


KNOWLEDGE NUGGETS

The Mystery of the Shortest Human Species

If you had visited Flores island in Indonesia just 50,000 years ago, you would have been surprised to find a real-life dwarf human species



Link: <https://lab.sapienship.co/the-mystery-of-the-shortest-human-species/>

Dwarves, gnomes and other little human-like people are abundant in folklore and legend. But if you had washed ashore on Flores island in Indonesia just 50,000 years ago, you would have been surprised to find a real-life dwarf human species.

Up to the time of Homo sapiens' arrival in Indonesia, a tiny 1-meter 25kg human species named Homo floresiensis occupied the island of Flores, using tools and hunting animals such as dwarf elephants. This type of evolution, in which large animals evolve to have a reduced body size, is called "insular dwarfism" or "island dwarfism".

The reason this happens is not completely understood. Interestingly, a limited environment like this can also cause small species to evolve to be very large compared to their mainland relatives. Unfortunately, most of these species are now extinct or endangered.

It's unclear why Homo floresiensis went extinct, but Sapiens have a long history of causing the extinction of other species (including Neanderthals) and our arrival more or less coincided with the Flores man's extinction. So, could we be the reason for this disappearance?

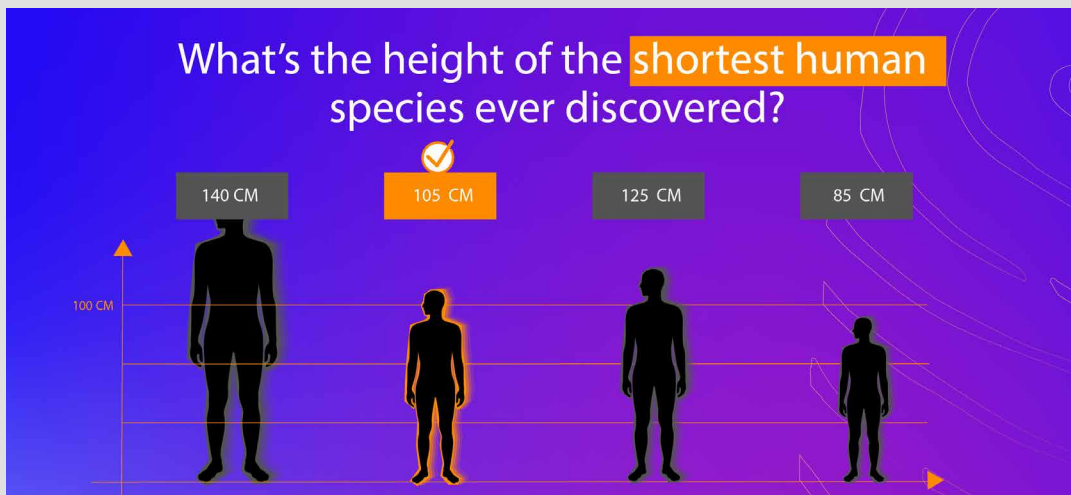
Questions

1. Humans have been preoccupied with dwarves and legendary little people since time immemorial.
Why do you think this is?
2. DNA editing technologies such as CRISPR may enable us to eliminate dwarfism in humans. Should we take that path?
3. Given that Homo sapiens may have contributed to the extinction of other human species, do we have a responsibility today to prevent the extinction of other animal species?
4. The climate crisis is threatening global food supplies, changing living conditions and pushing many people out of their homelands. Do you think it could have an effect on our physical features?

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Group Activity

1. Divide the group into several teams.
2. Pick one of the questions from the list below and let each team discuss it and then present their thoughts to the group; Alternatively, assign each team with a different question, and when they present it to the group ask the remaining teams for their thoughts as well.
3. If you choose question 4, give each team an article from the list (you can assign all of the articles or choose between them). Ask each team to summarize the article's main argument(s) and present it to the group. Things to note and address: where was the article published (a magazine? A news website? An academic journal?) Who is the author (a columnist? An academic?). Each team can also turn the article's core argument into a slogan ("AI deletes the I", "The solution is evolution", etc.). Ask each team to present their thoughts on the question to the group.

Questions

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- a. Article 1: Anthropologists show how migrant communities physically grow taller when they leave hardship behind.
Science Daily, March 2018

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/03/180308160710.htm>

- b. Article 2: Why some nationalities are getting shorter while the rest get taller.
World Economic Forum, July 2016

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/07/why-some-nationalities-are-get-shorter-while-the-rest-get-taller/>