

Giraffids and Bovids

Prof. Terry Harrison's research at Langebaanweg is based on comparisons of the mammalian fauna from Langebaanweg with similarly aged fauna from East Africa. The aim is to better understand regional differences in zoogeography and ecology across Africa during the Pliocene. In particular, his work has focused on the systematics of the neotragine bovids (dwarf antelopes) and giraffids (giraffes) at Langebaanweg and Laetoli in Tanzania. Terry Harrison has been directing paleontological and geological research at Laetoli since 1998. Both sites are unusual in that neotragines and giraffids are relatively common elements of the ruminant community. However, there are key differences in the composition of these groups at the two sites. Laetoli is dominated by dik-diks (*Madoqua aviflumina*) and by an okapi-sized giraffe (*Giraffa stillei*), whereas the Langebaanweg fauna has a large neotragine (*Raphicerus paralius*), distantly related to the modern grysbok, and a giant sivathere (short-necked giraffe), *Sivatherium hendeyi*. These comparisons highlight the important biogeographic and ecological differences between East and South Africa during the Mio-Pliocene.

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