

Eocene Adapidae, Paleobiogeography, and the Origin of South American Platyrrhini

6

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Introduction

The origin of South American platyrrhine monkeys or Ceboidea is among the most interesting problems in primatology. This problem is basically an historical one, and geological evidence has special importance for any solution. Fossil primates, mammalian faunas, and paleogeography have a direct bearing on the origin of South American monkeys. Fortunately, much has been learned in the past twenty years about the fossil record of primate evolution. Several recent discoveries are particularly important for understanding the origin of higher primates. Furthermore, new evidence about climatic history and faunal migration during the early Cenozoic provides an improved background for interpreting the primate fossil record. Much remains to be learned, but the evidence available at present is sufficient to suggest a reasonably detailed hypothesis of ceboid origins.

South American Faunas

Paleocene and Eocene mammalian faunas of South America (Riochican to Mustersan) include a diverse group of Marsupialia, edentates of the order

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