



Yves Coppens



Date of Birth 9 August 1934

Place Vannes (France)

Nomination 15 July 2014

Field Palaeontology, Palaeoanthropology, Prehistory, Archaeology

Title Professor

Most important awards, prizes and academies

Yves Coppens trained in Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Zoology, Botany (University of Rennes) and Palaeontology (Doctoral degrees, University of Paris-Sorbonne). His career, starting in 1956, has been conducted in different institutions, all of them in Paris, namely, in sequence, National Scientific Research Center, National Museum of Natural History (where he was elected as Chair of Biological Anthropology), and Collège de France (where he was elected Chair of Palaeoanthropology and Prehistory in 1983). Yves Coppens is a member of many scientific institutions all over the world (Academies of France, Belgium, Italy, UK, Brazil, Morocco, Ivory Coast, Malagasy, South Africa). He has received numerous scientific awards from France, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Ethiopia, Unesco, and civil ones from France, Chad, Monaco.

He is Doctor Honoris Causa of the Universities of Chicago, Bologna, Liège, Mons, and Honorary Citizen of 29 towns. His name has been given to several institutions (Universities, Colleges, Schools, etc...), to an Asteroid (!) and to a Chair at the University of Recife (Brazil).

Summary of scientific research

Yves Coppens is a field palaeontologist; he has organized, led or co-led many expeditions in tropical Africa (Chad, 1960-1966, Ethiopia, 1967-1976 in the Omo Valley and 1972-1977, in the Afar desert), in Asia (Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Mongolia, Siberia), many surveys in North and South Africa, as well as excavations in France. As a result of this field research, he collected tons of fossils, hundreds of hominids (he signed or co-signed three new genera and six new species of them) and, of course, an impressive amount of data.

His research focused on Fossil Vertebrate, their assemblages and their meaning in Palaeoenvironments, Climates and Biochronology, as well as on Fossil Hominids. He is known for his hypothesis showing for the first time the correlations between Hominid evolution and the evolution of the environments but also for unexpected conclusions in functional anatomy of early Hominids, their “double” locomotion, walking and climbing.

Main publications

He has authored or co-authored over a thousand of scientific papers and books (research and popular).