

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Tuesday 28th June 2022: 11.15-13.00, 14.00-16.00, 16.30-18.00

Room: Th. P

Chairs: Anja Mansrud (University of Stavanger), Morgan Windle (Kiel University), Kristin Armstrong-Oma (University of Stavanger); Ivana Živaljević (BioSense Institute, University of Novi Sad), Sonja Žakula (The Institute of Ethnography, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts), Henny Piezonka (Kiel University), Stephan Dudeck (University of Lapland)

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Abstract: This session proposes multispecies approaches and understandings advanced within the ontological turn, as analytical frameworks for exploring how hunter-gatherers past and present were living (well?) with other species. Prehistoric archaeology, entailing the study of human and animal remains from the beginnings of humanity, on a global scale, can contribute in a unique way to explore what it means to be human in a world populated by non-human others. Throughout the Holocene humans have *lived with animals* in multispecies environments. *How* humans have lived with animals varies within, and between, societies. Animals have been bred, domesticated, buried, hunted, and fished, nurtured as pets and companions in addition to being exploited as food and materials. We also reflect on the role of insects as cultural agents, by focusing on how insects have impacted hunter-fisher lifeways in the past and present, and what sort of challenges or solutions can insects represent to hunter-gatherers. A multispecies approach, inspired by ethology and biosemiotics, entanglement theory, and native ontologies, recognize that prehistoric communities were entwined with non-humans in social as well as ecological and economic ways. We further embrace the concept of «egomorphism» (Milton 2005), a perspective acknowledging that humans perceive animals as similar to themselves and able to partake in social relations, as a viable road to overcome the polarization between Western and indigenous ontologies, while still taking native perspectives seriously. Archaeology is largely invisible in current debates about the Anthropocene and human influence on the environment. Although archaeological periods lie far beyond the onset of this geological epoch as currently defined, engaging with the debates encourages us to reflect on relations to nature and animals past and present, and our role and place in the world. Archaeological finds can challenge present norms and understandings and provide depth and diversity to the Anthropocene-debate which would not be accessible from anthropological, geographical or historical data. We welcome papers exploring multispecies relations from a variety of perspectives – relational, zoo/biosemiotic, ethological, historical, anthropological, environmental and phenomenological, regardless of chronological, geographical or cultural context. Contributions may focus on methods, models, case studies or theoretical frameworks.

Milton, K. (2005). Anthropomorphism or egomorphism? The perception of non-human persons by human ones. In Knight, j. Ed.). *Animals in person*. Routledge.

Keywords: non-humans, animals, insects, human-environment relationships, ethnography, archaeology, multispecies theory

11.15-11.27	Amy Gray Jones	<i>Living well together: Multispecies bodies in the European Mesolithic</i>
11.27-11.39	Barry Taylor	<i>Multispecies landscapes in early Mesolithic Britain</i>
11.39-11.51	Kristiina Mannermaa	<i>Pendants, raw materials and multispecies worlds</i>
11.51-12.03	Nathalie Brusgaard	<i>(In)visible interactions between humans and wild boar in the Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic</i>
12.03-12.15	Rebekka Eckelmann, Kristiina Mannermaa	<i>Something fishy in Karelia – Investigating the dichotomy between animal representation in graves and diet at Yuzhny Oleniy Ostrov</i>
12.15-12.27	Charlotte Damm	<i>Relational ontologies in a maritime community: Mid-Holocene northern Norway</i>
12.27-12.39	Anja Mansrud	<i>Sign of the times: Mesolithic communication beyond human-to-human signalling</i>
12.39-12.51	Natasha Reynolds et al	<i>Late Upper Palaeolithic mammoth bone structures as ritualized middens</i>
12.51-13.00	Discussion	

14.00-14.12	Ruksan Bose	<i>Traditional ecological knowledge: creating a living archive</i>
14.12-14.24	Jessica van der Wal, Claire Spottiswoode, Yao honey-hunters	<i>A mosaic of mutualism between people and honeyguide birds</i>
14.24-14.36	Colin Scott	<i>Interspecies Collaboration in Iiyiyu Hunting</i>
14.36-14.48	Katherine Reedy	<i>Ecosystem Engineers: Shaping the Aleutian Subsistence Landscape and Seascape</i>
14.48-15.00	Morgan Windle, Stephan Dudeck, Henny Piezonka	<i>Pests and partners: the role of bloodsucking insects in human-reindeer systems amongst modern West Siberian hunter-gatherers</i>
15.00-15.12	Georgia Curran	<i>Human-ant relationships of interdependence in the Australian Tanami desert: some evidence from Warlpiri women's songs</i>
15.12-15.24	Rebekka Eckelmann	<i>Invisible Foods – Considering the role of insects in prehistoric subsistence</i>
15.24-15.36	Andrew Wiget, Olga Balalaeva	<i>Sharing The World With Bears: The Siberian Khanty Example</i>
15.36-15.48	Julie Julison	<i>Possible Insect Effigies from the Western United States</i>
15.48-16.00	Discussion	

16.30-16.42	Marianne Skandfer	<i>Hunters and animals: Appreciating the wild</i>
16.42-16.54	Kristin Armstrong-Oma	<i>'Come away, O human child, to the water and the wild' Hunter-gatherers and/as farmers in Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age western Norway</i>
16.54-17.06	Trond Lødøen	<i>Decolonising Late Mesolithic animals</i>
17.06-17.18	Sonja Žakula	<i>Rethinking animal personhood beyond "borrowing" from native ontologies</i>
17.18-17.30	Ivana Živaljević	<i>Trophic cascades and Naturecultural entanglements: towards ontologically inclusive pasts</i>
17.30-17.42	Nick Overton	<i>Archaeology and Rewilding: Returning to the past, or opening new multispecies futures?</i>
17.42-18.00	Discussion	

Session 1: 11.15-13.00

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Living well together: Multispecies bodies in the European Mesolithic

Authors: Amy Gray Jones (University of Chester) a.grayjones@chester.ac.uk

Abstract: Multispecies approaches have been used to good effect in archaeology to rethink the relationship between humans and animals. In particular, archaeologists have shown how animals are agents, capable of acting upon the world and affecting the lives of humans. There has, however, been less work on the way the past human body was affected by such multispecies encounters; how the materiality of past human bodies was shaped and reformed through their interactions with the world, and how human health and well-being emerged through entanglements with animals, plants and other multispecies agents. Focusing on the European Mesolithic, this paper explores how human bodies were co-authored through their multispecies engagements with a range of animals, from marine mammals to tapeworms, as well as with other elements of the world. In doing so, it argues that there was no uniform, homogenous, human form, and instead bodies were historical and contextual, specific to particular Mesolithic places and times.

Keywords: Mesolithic, Europe, bioarchaeology, body, multispecies

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Multispecies landscapes in early Mesolithic Britain

Authors: Barry Taylor (University of Chester) b.taylor@chester.ac.uk

Abstract: One of the great strengths of the Multispecies perspective is that it foregrounds the co-dependence of living things. While the focus of our enquiry may be a particular species of animal or plant, we approach it from an understanding of its inter-relationship with other elements of the world. In doing so, we emphasise the reciprocal nature of life, and the co-creation of the environment.

This paper considers the implications of a Multispecies perspective on our understanding of the relationship between humans, animals and other aspects of the environment in the past, focusing in particular on the British early Mesolithic. It argues that, rather than focusing on environmental 'management' or human 'impacts', we can explore the ways in which environments were co-produced through the complex entanglements of the lives of humans, animals and plants, and how these relationships may have been perceived by human communities. This, in turn, allows us to rethink the character of past environments, the important roles that humans played in co-shaping them, and challenging the idea that a 'natural' environment ever existed.

Keywords: Multispecies, human-animal relations, ontology, environmental change

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Pendants, raw materials and multispecies worlds

Authors: Kristiina Mannermaa (University of Helsinki) kristiina.mannermaa@helsinki.fi

Abstract: Several pendants made of human and animal bone were found in graves at Late Mesolithic Yuzhny Oleniy Ostrov, Russia. The shapes and sizes of these bone pendants resemble tooth pendants

made of teeth of Eurasian elk, Eurasian beaver and brown bear. These pendants were mainly found in similar contexts, indicating that they might have been used in a similar: they were attached to separate ornaments, rattles, head gear and clothes. The similar shape and context of the bone and tooth pendants raises a question: could these irregularly formed bone pendants, made from human and animal bone, in fact be substitutes for tooth pendants? To make an animal tooth imitation out of human bone may carry a symbolism known from other contexts, namely the notion of the transformation and fluidity of beings and things. According to such a view, humans can transform into animals and animals can transform into humans by using implements (for example, body parts such as bones or feathers or artifacts and their sounds). Merging pendants made from the raw material of humans and animals could have symbolized the need or ability to alter one's state of being, from human to elk, beaver or bear and/or the other way around. This could also mean that bone from human and animals and their bone was perceived in a same manner and they all were able to participate in various social relations.

Keywords: Late mesolithic burials, bone pendants, tooth pendants, raw materials

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

(In)visible interactions between humans and wild boar in the Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic

Authors: Nathalie Brusgaard (University of Groningen) n.o.brusgaard@rug.nl

Abstract: The Atlantic period in northwest Europe witnessed the transition from hunting and gathering to farming. Throughout this time of pivotal changes, wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) are a constant presence at sites in the Dutch wetlands. Their remains indicate continued hunting of wild boar populations from the earliest evidence in this area (ca. 5500 BC) to the latest (3500 BC). Yet, simultaneously, this species is entangled in the fundamental shift towards animal husbandry, either through their local domestication by foraging-early farming communities and/or their coexistence with their cousin of Near Eastern descent, the domestic pig. While many studies have endeavoured to uncover the domestication process, the nature of the human-wild boar relationship throughout this period remains elusive. This paper offers a diachronic perspective on the role of the wild boar in the hunting-gathering societies of the Dutch wetlands in the Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic. It discusses the visible interactions between humans and wild boar, and contemplates the invisible interactions that made up the ecosystem of relationships that humans and wild boar were part of in this period of change. By examining these interactions from a multispecies perspective, this paper furthermore considers how we can move from seeing non-human animals as passive reactors to anthropogenic change to recognising them as agents in a more-than-human past.

Keywords: Wild boar; Mesolithic; Neolithic; hunting; more-than-human

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Something fishy in Karelia – Investigating the dichotomy between animal representation in graves and diet at Yuzhniy Oleniy Ostrov

Authors: Rebekka Eckelmann (University of Helsinki) rebekka.eckelmann@helsinki.fi; Kristiina Mannermaa (University of Helsinki) kristiina.mannermaa@helsinki.fi

Abstract: Due to its size and regionally unique quality of preservation the burial site of Yuzhniy Oleniy Ostrov (Karelia/Russia) provides an exceptional chance to investigate human-animal relationships in

the Mesolithic of Northeastern Europe through both zooarchaeological and bioarchaeological analyses. Said analyses have revealed marked differences in the visibility and use between terrestrial and aquatic animals as well as birds. While isotopic investigations revealed a strong reliance on freshwater aquatic resources, fish and other aquatic animals are not encountered at the burial site of Yuzhniy Oleniy Ostrov and only the presence of a small number of potential fishing tools indicate fishing at all. In contrast, terrestrial animals are present both as the majority of faunal remains as well as in artistic depictions, even though they had only minor dietary impact. This shows a clear dichotomy between the animals that are part of daily subsistence and those associated with the mortuary contexts indicating different social and economic roles these animals represented in the Yuzhniy Oleniy Ostrov mortuary community. In this paper we discuss potential explanations for this division and explore it within the larger concepts of subsistence and cosmology in the Northern Mesolithic.

Keywords: Archaeology; Mesolithic; Russian Karelia; subsistence; human-animal relationship

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Relational ontologies in a maritime community: Mid-Holocene northern Norway

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Abstract: The late Stone Age populations in northernmost Norway relied extensively on fishing and sealing for their subsistence, as inferred from osteological data and the location of settlements. However, there is a surprising lack of evidence for this relationship in rock art or other representations from the period in this area. These are instead dominated by terrestrial mammals such as reindeer, elk and bear, species that figure prominently across most Eurasian prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies, and as a result also in interpretations of past cosmologies and multispecies ontologies. A few exceptions to this pattern in northern Norway are depictions of halibut and ornamented sinkers. This paper will present a discussion of the lack of conspicuous material representations of and engagement with maritime beings. What is the background for emphasizing terrestrial rather than marine mammals or other species? How can we proceed to achieve a broader understanding of the multispecies worlds in these maritime surroundings? Several avenues can be proposed, departing not only from the case of the halibut, but also from the frequent depictions of boats (with elk heads) and the role of seal and reindeer hides.

Keywords: Maritime, late Stone Age, rock art, cosmology, ontology

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Sign of the times: Mesolithic communication beyond human-to-human signalling

Authors: Anja Mansrud () anja.mansrud@uis.no

Abstract: Hunter-fisher-gatherers in Mesolithic Norway (9300-4000 BC) shared their environments with a multitude of other beings. Yet, the discipline remains limited in recognition of the social roles that artefacts and animals played in the lives of Mesolithic people. This paper argues that combining semiotic and multi-species perspectives, with a biographic/traceological approach to ornated hunting and fishing equipment, has significant potential to transform our understanding of Mesolithic aesthetics and visual expression, moving beyond interpretations of portable art as prestige items representative of social status in human hierarchies, towards an understanding of sign-making and

ornamentation as part of inter-species communication and engagement. A soapstone sinker, ornamented by fish-like and geometrical patterns, is used as a prism to explore communication beyond human-to-human signalling, and I suggest that engraved foraging equipment carry messages intended for more-than-human addressees (cf. Tsing 2015).

Tsing, A. 2013. More-than-human sociality: a call for critical description. In *Anthropology and nature*, 37-52. Routledge.

Keywords: Mesolithic, more-than-human, signs, sinker, engravings

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Late Upper Palaeolithic mammoth bone structures as ritualized middens

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Abstract: The Late Upper Palaeolithic mammoth bone structures of Russia and Ukraine are famous in archaeology as the supposed remains of massive dwelling structures. However, recent Eastern European scholarship has turned against this interpretation, and instead suggests that the structures were predominantly ritual in nature. They are in fact very similar to ritualized middens known from many archaeological and anthropological contexts.

Here, based particularly on work at the Russian site of Yudinovo, I outline the evidence allowing us to evaluate these two different interpretations. At Yudinovo, the structures lack convincing internal hearths or typical floor deposits. The mammoth remains appear to have been deposited directly on the ground and subsequently covered with sediment. There is no evidence of a roof structure that later collapsed. Some of the mammoth bones were found in articulation and were deposited without being fully defleshed. Finally, the structures at Yudinovo and elsewhere have numerous features of ritualized middens found elsewhere, such as the inclusion of symbolically important material, the overwhelming dominance of mammoth remains compared with other species, the carefully structured arrangement of the remains, the building of mounds, and the particular attention paid to the mammoths' heads.

The ritualized midden interpretation adds to our understanding of the complexity of human-mammoth relationships during the Late Upper Palaeolithic. It also demonstrates the inadequacy of narrowly economic interpretations of the archaeological record.

Keywords: Upper Palaeolithic, mammoths, middens, Eastern Europe, ritual

Session 2: 14.00-16.00

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Traditional ecological knowledge: creating a living archive

Authors: Ruksan Bose (Congo Basin Institute, IITA Cameroon) r.bose@cgiar.org

Abstract: This paper addresses issues related to interfacing intergenerational hunter-gatherer knowledge transmission with the structures of scientific knowledge and research. Conceived in the context of eroding ecological knowledge among the sedentarised Baka people of Central African rainforests, a goal of the School for Indigenous and Local Knowledge (SILK) is to integrate traditional

ecological knowledge, skills and modes of transmission into scientific education and conservation research using the forest as its classroom.

Having roamed them for millennia, the Baka effortlessly navigate the forest and its seasonality, following unseen tracks. They know the flowering and fruiting cycles and individual properties of thousands of plants. Their hunters can trace the daily activities of most animals and their seasonal patterns of resource use. The Baka were thus ideal partners to co-create a research project around mutualistic interactions between plants and their animal seed dispersers in Congo basin rainforests. Young Baka thus learn and work alongside elder in protected forests to which they no longer have access.

We will reflect on the outcomes of this project enriched by mutual learning in spaces that follow the dynamics of a community's aspirations of belonging to the two worlds of the forest and the road. Collaborative work between indigenous communities and researchers can be a means toward improving indigenous livelihoods and relations with external actors. Moving beyond "traditionality" and the "noble savage", it can also be a means to facilitate the intergenerational knowledge transfer and understand a complex forest ecosystem that is the basis of Baka life and culture.

Keywords: Ethno-ecology, Traditional knowledge, Indigenous, Education, Rainforest

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A mosaic of mutualism between people and honeyguide birds

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Abstract: Honeyguides are wax-eating African birds that cooperate with humans to gain access to bees' nests. The birds lead honey-hunters to bees' nests, which are harvested for honey, and the birds feed on beeswax left behind. Honey-hunting with honeyguides is likely to be an ancient part of human evolutionary history, and is a skill set that is passed on from father to son. In areas where people still honey-hunt, there is substantial variation within and between cultures in human behaviour relevant to honeyguides, for example in the signals used to communicate with honeyguides, and in peoples' customs of rewarding the bird. Honeyguides learn to respond to local cultural variation in human signals that coordinate the mutualism, which is especially remarkable given that honeyguides are brood parasites and so lack social information from their parents. Opportunities to study this unique mutualism are rapidly declining. In Africa, relatively few human cultures still rely heavily on wild-harvested honey. Factors contributing to this decline include environmental change, easier access to sugar for humans, exclusion of humans from protected areas, and increased beekeeping. For the human communities involved, loss of honey-hunting knowledge means losing a cornerstone in their cultural identities. For honeyguides, it likely means much reduced access to beeswax. To investigate how spatial and temporal variation in human traits shapes this remarkable human-bird mutualism, one focus of our ongoing research is to characterise Africa's remaining honey-hunting cultures and to identify local causes of decline, in which we are guided by indigenous cultural and ecological knowledge.

Keywords: honey-hunters, interspecies knowledge, honeyguides, African cultures, multispecies relations

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Interspecies Collaboration in Iiyiyiu Hunting

Authors: Colin Scott (McGill University) colin.scott@mcgill.ca

Abstract: Iiyiyiuch (Cree) of subarctic James Bay contemplate diverse interspecies collaborations in interpreting hunting experience. Origin stories are charters for such collaboration, echoed in dream, song, ceremony and the texture of everyday experience. It is not that all episodes in quotidian hunting affirm collaboration in particularly memorable fashion, but some do. And in any event, attention to communities of species, their interactions and collaborations connects human mind and mindfulness to larger mind. It is a knowing together in interspecies communication, with intentions and outcomes dreamed, divined and witnessed, though not fixed or certain. This attention, this knowledge, recognizes the ambiguous and unfathomable alongside the patterned and expected; it is capable of surprise, and enjoyment of the sacred gift affirmed.

Keywords: mutualism, relationality, mind, experience

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Ecosystem Engineers: Shaping the Aleutian Subsistence Landscape and Seascape

Authors: Katherine Reedy (Idaho State University) katherinereedy@isu.edu

Abstract: The Aleutian Islands are home to the Aleut/Unangan people, a suite of marine species, and a few terrestrial species, many of which have been introduced. As complex hunter-gatherers, the human relationship to the environment and its other inhabitants is intimate, essential for human survival, and has evolved over many centuries. The Aleut people have shaped this landscape and waters such that it is also mutually constructed. Archaeologists have made this claim as an ancient and historical phenomenon. This paper documents more recent demonstrations of a mutually constructed island chain environment, from the introduced land mammals to the subtle engineering of plant, shellfish, and fish species for abundance and variety, and contributes to forager model discussions. These interactions are the result of deliberate choices to sustain communities of Aleut indigenous peoples in volatile environmental and economic places.

Keywords: Aleutians, subsistence, ecosystem, sustainability

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Pests and partners: the role of bloodsucking insects in human-reindeer systems amongst modern West Siberian hunter-gatherers

Authors: Morgan Windle (Kiel University) mwindle@roots.uni-kiel.de; Stephan Dudeck (University of Lapland) stephan.dudeck@ulapland.fi; Henny Piezonka (Kiel University) hpiezonka@ufg.uni-kiel.de

Abstract: In Northern Eurasia, Rangifer tarandus (reindeer) have helped shape the complex socio-cultural fabrics of mobile hunter-fisher societies. Through an intimate partnership that is grounded in symbiosis, reindeer are animate persons with roles as both herded and wild animals. In the West Siberian tundra and taiga zones, modern hunter-fisher-herder communities coexist with reindeer, co-creating culture through their entwined multispecies lifeways. Archaeological evidence from tundra Iron Age sites demonstrate that this type of cohabitation may have existed for at least two millennia, and methods for investigating the timing and details of human-reindeer interactions in the

archaeological record are currently expanding. However, as techniques of investigation improve, we argue that other animate beings which co-construct social, economic, and cultural systems should be considered. The enduring traditional practices of modern herders could provide inferences into the formation processes of human-reindeer systems which form the archaeological record.

Here, we investigate the human-reindeer-insect interface, specifically the paradoxical role of mosquitoes, midges, and horseflies in reindeer herding of West Siberia. How do insects and forest-tundra ecosystems reciprocally shape coexistence? How do these insects influence human and reindeer daily life? How does insect avoidance behaviour in reindeer influence herding? In this paper, we will discuss the intersection of insects, reindeer, and hunter-fisher ecologies. From folklore to material constructions to seasonal mobilities we seek to explore how insects, less visible in the archaeological record, can impact hunter-fisher lifeways and trigger unique niche construction activities. In assessing this, we hope to expand multispecies parameters for unravelling the archaeological record.

Keywords: reindeer, human-animal relations, insects, folklore, West Siberia

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Human-ant relationships of interdependence in the Australian Tanami desert: some evidence from Warlpiri women's songs

Authors: Georgia Curran (University of Sydney) georgia.curran@sydney.edu.au

Abstract: Across Central Australia, lengthy songlines have been essential to carry forward the knowledge and practices for human survival in the harsh arid interior of the continent, a region with one of the most variable rainfalls in the world. In the Tanami desert which is dominated by acacia shrubland and spinifex grassland, the human-ant interactions to produce seed foods has most likely been central to sustaining populations until the very recent past. This paper draws on some Warlpiri women's songs about seeds which detail methods of harvest, production and storage and reveal the complex relationships of interdependence between Warlpiri people and ants. Nowadays, with the availability of store-bought flours and bread these time-consuming and complex forms of seed food production are no longer practiced, yet these human-insect relationships as developed over long time periods remain central to the social organisation and cultural identity of Warlpiri people.

Keywords: human-nonhuman relationships; Central Australia; food production; women's songs; social organisation

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Invisible Foods – Considering the role of insects in prehistoric subsistence

Authors: Rebekka Eckelmann (University of Helsinki) rebekka.eckelmann@helsinki.fi

Abstract: Edible insects are not only considered to be the future of sustainable protein sourcing but are already regularly consumed by about a third of the global population, among them many Hunter-Gatherer societies. Despite this well-known fact insects and, to a degree, other invertebrates, are customarily ignored in archaeological considerations of prehistoric diet and subsistence.

This ignorance is a result of Western emetophobic bias and the scarcity and, due to their size and frailty, often challenging preservation of insect fossils. Furthermore, even if they are preserved, insect remains are usually not collected during archaeological excavations. The consequential lack of inclusion of a complete faunal clade in most dietary and socio-cultural interpretative models

contradicts a holistic approach to our understanding of past subsistence strategies and has the potential to lead to flawed interpretations of dietary proxies.

Therefore, this paper aims at providing a brief assessment of insectivorous practices in current Hunter-Gatherer societies and then compare it with the visibility of edible insects in archaeological research. Subsequently, it will consider indicators for nutritional significant insectivory in past populations and propose measures to further the inclusion of invertebrates into palaeodietary reconstructions.

Keywords: insectivory; archaeology; palaeodiet; dietary reconstructions

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Sharing the World with Bears: The Siberian Khanty Example

Authors: Andrew Wiget (New Mexico State University) andrew.wiget@gmail.com; Olga Balalaeva o.balalaeva@gmail.com

Abstract: Conservation regimes vary widely but all share a common problem: effective implementation that is inclusive and collaborative depends upon a discourse of shared terminology and mutually intelligible referents. This problem arises because multiple ontologies exist not only among various publics but within the local indigenous community. Taking indigenous ideas seriously, as P. Nadasdy points out, “necessarily entails rethinking many of the most basic concepts of social theory.” (2007: 26) This paper describes the uniquely moral character of the “mutuality of being” that characterizes the human-bear relationship held by the elder generation of eastern Khanty. Further, we explore how it might inform our own understanding of both “animal” and “person.” The paper concludes by suggesting the potential of this and other indigenous ontologies for developing a more inclusive and just management system as well as the limitations that emerge as different stresses erode this ontology.

Keywords: bears, conservation, mutuality, ontology, Siberia

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Possible Insect Effigies from the Western United States

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Abstract: The Great Basin is a closed drainage and has no outflow, located in the western United States, centered in Nevada but stretching out to many of the neighboring states. This region is often labeled barren and unworthy to sustain human existence, despite the fact that many Native American groups survived and even thrived. When we think about archaeology from this area we usually don't think about art. If we do it is in the form of rock art, of which there is plenty, but there is another type that commonly gets overlooked, portable art. There are basically three forms of these small creative artifacts: ceramic figurines, incised stones, and small rocks that have had their shape altered into what is believed to mimic some type of anthropomorphic animal. It is this last category that this discussion will focus on. I propose some of these objects may have been misidentified and present an alternative hypothesis, with related evidence for consideration. This study examines three effigies, two of these are possibly grasshoppers and the third of a predaceous diving beetle. A larger implication of this research is adding to the current dialog of insects in subsistence strategies by ancient cultures around the world and more specifically in the Great Basin of North America. The importance of these food resources may then be transferred and reflected in these portable art objects, which provides additional evidence of their significance. **Keywords:** Insects, portable art, effigies

Session 3: 16.30-18.00

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Hunters and animals: Appreciating the wild

Authors: Marianne Skandfer (The Arctic University Museum - UiT - the Arctic University of Norway)
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Abstract: You need not spend much time with wild animals to be emotionally affected by them. Taking the concept of “egomorphism” and ethnographic and anthropological analogies as a starting point, it is assumed that prehistoric foragers perceived wild animals as similar to themselves, but that they also appreciated “wild” as a particular but complex quality of animals, and that this quality included characteristics sought by humans. Ethnographic and anthropological literature tell of various ways in which hunters have acted to physically transfer particularly valuable qualities from specific animals to themselves. Inspired by social value theory suggesting that what is ultimately being evaluated as valuable are not things, but actions, this paper explores multispecies relationships in Late Stone Age northern Fennoscandia.

Keywords: Foragers, wild animals, appreciation, Stone Age

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

“Come away, O human child, to the water and the wild” Hunter-gatherers and/as farmers in Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age western Norway

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Abstract: In late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age western Norway, farming gradually became a way of living, and adaptive husbandry practices and small scale growing of crops existed side by side with hunter-gathering practices for centuries. Examples of such co-mingled existences with domestic and wild animals are found at diverse sites, both the Early Bronze Age village of Forsandmoen in Rogaland and rock shelters close to the sea, such as Stangelandshelleren, and rock shelters in the mountains, most notably Skrivarhelleren. At these sites, layers with intermingled faunal remains from domestic and wild animals are retrieved. Although it is known that many such sites exist from prehistoric society, the archaeological discourse normally maintains a division between hunter-gatherers and farmers as a watershed in human history. In Norwegian archaeology, this division is referred to as cultural dualism, and it has been acknowledged that culturally separate groups of hunter-gatherers and farmers shared the land, but not that both roles were inhabited within the same group. However, evidence points to co-existing engagements with wild and domestic animals, and that living well with animals was living within of these trajectories.

In this paper, I will discuss the discursive division between hunter-gatherers and farmers, by examining communities where prehistoric people were not either-or, but simultaneously embraced both ways of living. What consequences would such a subsistence strategy have for living in the land, for living well with the other denizens of the water and the wild?

Keywords: Multispecies archaeology, Norway, Late Neolithic, Early Bronze Age

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Decolonising Late Mesolithic animals

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Abstract: The paper will present and discuss examples in the iconography of the Late Mesolithic Northern Tradition rock art of Scandinavia with an aim of exploring alternative past understanding of animals. The tradition is renowned for its many depictions of animals, and for more than a century it has been related to past hunting strategies and hunting magic, with rock art locations frequently understood as hunting grounds. Despite new approaches in archaeology over the last few decades, together with ontologies and ethnographic examples that have opened the way for an alternative and pre-cartesian understanding of all species, most approaches within Stone Age studies seem to return to present day conditions, where modern western ideology and attitudes towards animals are projected onto the past, connecting their former importance to prehistoric economy and subsistence. However, such explanatory frameworks fail to provide adequate explanations of a number of animal-animal relations in the iconography that are not known in nature and also animal-human interactions that clearly addresses other perspectives that subsistence. It will tentatively be argued that the Late Mesolithic iconography might work as a resource for the identification of similar animal relations and associations in the contemporary material archaeological and osteological record, where modern scientific premises might not be fully adequate to uncover how a number of species were perceived in the past.

Keywords: Late Mesolithic, rock art, animals, worldview, rethinking

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Rethinking animal personhood beyond “borrowing” from native ontologies

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Abstract: For a discipline that had no trouble accepting the agency of objects, social anthropology and its practitioners seem reluctant to accept the personhood of animals. Anthropologists will propose that people inhabit entirely different realities, rather than accept that other animals are actually, really persons. Also, for a discipline that has thrived by incorporating indigenous knowledge in its theories (studies of kinship and exchange come to mind), we are uncharacteristically worried about incorporating animal persons.

More to the point, the anthropological conversation regarding animal personhood tends to be limited to hunter-gatherers, and often becomes a precarious balancing act between taking native ontologies seriously and an insidious double othering of sorts. While we’ve thankfully moved on from saying that hunter-gatherers believe that animals are persons, we are now saying that animals are persons for them. This leads to the presumption that in order to consider animal personhood, we must borrow from native ontologies – that this is something so utterly alien to us, we need other people’s cultural road map. This is untrue, and a symptom of the reluctance of western epistemology to center animals lest the ontological human/animal divide be usurped. As my ethnographic fieldwork in a Serbian zoo suggests, post-industrial European zoo-keepers indeed regard animals as persons – if they did not, the zoo would collapse. However, animal personhood is not an obvious cultural given among post-industrial Europeans, but a quality achieved through mutuality, recognized over time and rarely talked about. This presentation will pose the question of animal personhood as a reality beyond native ontology.

Keywords: social anthropology, animal personhood, ontology

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Trophic cascades and Naturecultural entanglements: towards ontologically inclusive pasts

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Abstract: The process of animal and plant domestication has long been dominated by grand narratives of human mastery over Nature. By contrast, hunter-gatherers were often conceived (or, to borrow from Tim Ingold, “invented”) as being “in sync” with Nature, inhabiting unaltered, pristine landscapes. These polarizing, social-evolutionary views centred on modes of subsistence (privileging food production in particular) have become destabilized in more recent times, with the growing recognition that foraging communities too actively shaped their environment. Nevertheless, while the changing attitudes towards hunter-gatherers recognized their agency and the (subtle) differences in the degree of animal and plant management, the tacit anthropocentrism lingers on. The exclusive focus on human agency failed to acknowledge that animals, plants, and all other organisms lumped under the term “environment” can and do act back, often in unpredictable ways, eliciting various responses. Mutual becoming of humans and nonhumans was not simply an outcome of intentional modification, but emerged through continuous engagement and dwelling. These turns in archaeology drew heavily from ecological and ethological studies and relational ontologies of contemporary hunter-gatherers, both engaged with mutually constitutive interspecies relations. It is mainly the intersubjective, interpersonal, and inherently social character of relations in the latter which represents the point of divergence. In this paper, I argue that the concept of trophic cascades, borrowed from ecology to designate the interdependence of all beings in the environment can be understood as a bone fide Naturecultural entanglement, opening new possibilities to think about dynamic multispecies assemblages in prehistory.

Keywords: human–nonhuman relations, trophic cascades, entanglements, multispecies, Natureculture

Multispecies worlds and socio-centric societies – living together with animals, plants, and insects

Archaeology and Rewilding: Returning to the past, or opening new multispecies futures?

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Abstract: ‘Rewilding’ is increasingly being used to counter the destruction of habitats, species and biodiversity. Whilst this can be thought of as a ‘return’ to past conditions (which archaeological data can inform on), rewilding can alternatively be thought of as the return of control to nonhuman species who can manage landscapes beyond the abilities of humans. Far from a return to the past, this rewilding is about new multispecies futures. The lack of a return to the past does not, however, preclude archaeology’s involvement. Giving nonhumans control is an inherently ontological issue; people need to believe nonhumans can (and should) actively and successfully manage environs in order to believe rewilding programmes can be successful. In the western world, this requires an ontological shift, and archaeology has the power to bring this about.

Narratives of the past can be powerful in shaping current practices; traditional archaeological approaches to animals that characterised them as objectified nutritional and calorific packages present a timeless narrative of humankind’s mastery over animals. This is, however, being challenged

by a growing number of studies that consider the potential for meaningful living social relationships between humans and active nonhumans in the past. Using examples from Mesolithic Britain, this paper will present archaeological narratives of multispecies pasts that emphasise the roles nonhumans had in shaping the world, and human lives. In doing so, I argue that archaeology has the power to encourage people today to reconsider, and reconfigure their understanding of nonhumans, and their role in the world.

Keywords: Multispecies Archaeology, Mesolithic, Rewilding