

High Elevation, Late Prehistoric Bison Processing in the Absaroka Mountains, North West Wyoming

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Abstract

The summer 2008 GRSLE project in the Absaroka Mountains of North West Wyoming continued research into prehistoric people's mountain land practices. The recent Little Venus Fire exposed bison bone in many areas, including a bison processing locality at 2600 m above sea level. A part of the recent GRSLE project involved analyzing bison bone to understand butchery practices and bison paleoecology. The site appeared to represent logistical mobility as seen through analysis of skeletal elements, breakages and the biometrics of bison bones. Although research showed the people used primarily limb bones from bison, they used mountain sheep as well.

What was the intensification of bison processing at site 060-07?

How do the levels of complexity at 060-07 compare to past views of the Shoshone?

Methods

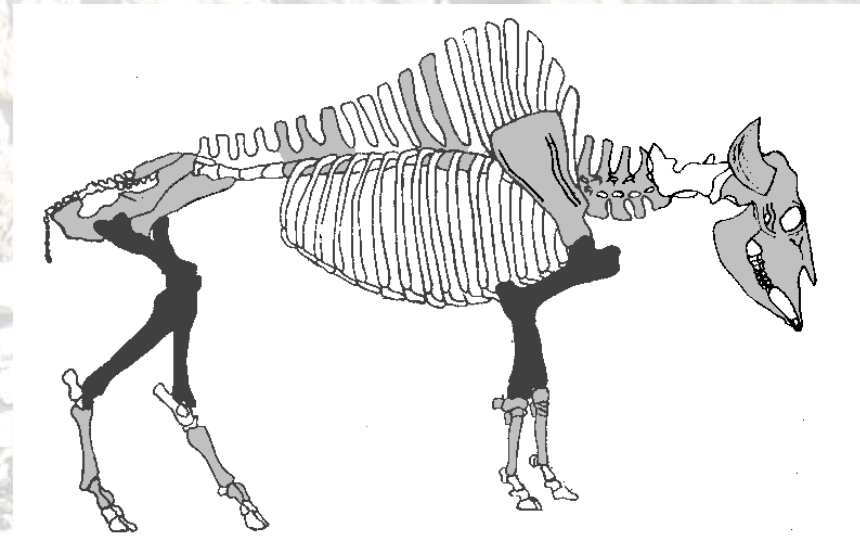
The methods used to collect data were in field datum collection. A number of days were spent walking through site 060-07 marking identifiable bone with pin flags then returning to document what type of bone it was, if it had cut marks or impact fractures, the biometrics of the bone and whether or not it was affected by the fire. Pictures were collected as well on bones that had distinct cut marks or crushing fractures.



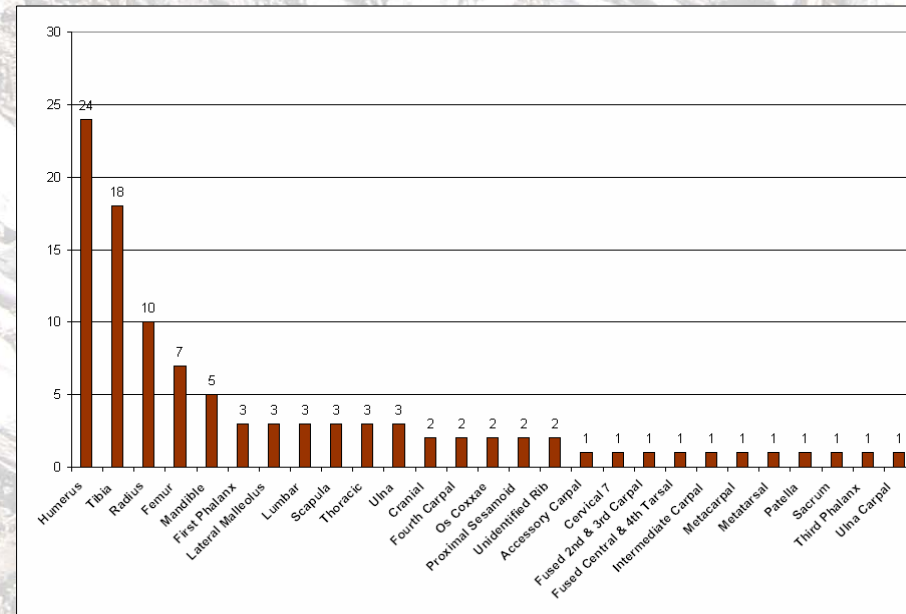
Impact Fracture



Cut Mark



- Black bones are the long bones which were found in high frequency at 060-07
- Grey bones are other bone fragments that were found at 060-07
- White bones were not present or not visible on the surface at 060-07



- Of the 24 Humerus bones 13 were right humeri, showing that there were at least 13 bison processed at 060-07.
- 59 of the 103 bones at site 060-07 were long bones, this is 57% of the visible bones found on the surface.

- Of the 103 Bones found on the surface of 060-07, 6 bones were found with Cut marks and 6 bones were found with impact fractures.
- About 12% of the bones identified at 060-07 had some form of cultural impact on them.

Discussion

Of the data collected there was a primary focus on the HM7 count which is the distal end of the humeral, to determine what kind of butchery practice was taking place, what types of tools were being used and also understanding basic bison paleoecology. With a total number of 13 right humeri found through out the site this can establish that there was at least 13 bison that were processed at this site; A majority of what was found was long bones.

Conclusion

By analyzing the data from the site it is clear that one of the major sources of subsistence were bison, while not limited to bison the majority of bones found were long bones. This was most likely the case because not only do long bones have ample supplies of meat but they also contain large quantities of bone marrow.

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Acknowledgements

First I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Larry Todd for making the GRSLE project possible and giving myself and other students the wonderful experience of plains archaeology first hand. I would also like to give a special thanks to Becky Thomas, Abe Thompson, Mikah Jaschke, Katie Waechter, Suzanne East, Sarah Ficarrotta, and Melissa Webb for their assistance and guidance over the course of the summer and fall of 2008.