Zooarchaeology and the Urbanization of Vancouver, WA ca. 1876 to 1918

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INTRODUCTION

With increased industrialization during the 19th century, there occurred in America a monumental shift from an economy based on rural subsistence to one dominated by urban wage labor and large-scale manufacturing. With this shift, increasing numbers of people moved from rural areas to growing urban centers where they participated in a rapidly expanding capitalist market system. This change happened rapidly in places with advances in the transportation infrastructure, but in the more remote areas such as the Pacific Northwest, the timing of this transition from rural to urban society was less well understood.

The late 1800s is a critical time in the development of places such as Vancouver, WA. The infrastructure and social atmosphere was dramatically changing the way people consumed and disposed of goods, and the lack of sanitation laws meant refuse was still deposited informally in backyards. This accumulation of household waste provides zooarcheologists a unique opportunity to explore how household diets reflect the social changes associated with increased urbanization.

This poster presents the preliminary results of a study of the faunal material recovered during archaeological excavations of over 30 refuse features dating between ca. 1876 to 1918 within six city blocks located in western Vancouver, WA.

METHODS

• Excavation was conducted by Applied Archaeological Research in 2004 and 2005
• Remains identified to the lowest taxonomic level possible
• Attributes recorded include butchery and processing marks such as saw, slice, chop, snap, and gnawing marks, as well as degree of burning
• Complete elements such as cross and round cuts measured
• Stage of epiphyseal fusion recorded

RESULTS

Taxa Identified

- Cow (Bos)
- Sheep (Ovis)
- Rabbit (Lagomorph)
- Pig (Sus)
- Deer (Odocoileus)
- Rat (Rattus norvegicus)
- Cat (Felis)
- Dog (Canis)
- Squirrels (?)

- Salmon (Salmonid)
- Halibut (Hippoglossus)
- Sturgeon (Acipenser)
- Catfish (Ictalurus)
- Stickleback (Gasterosteus aculeatus)
- Smed (Osmeridae)
- Small ( Likely Marine) Fish (currently unidentified)
- Dungeness Crab (Cancer magister)
- Mussel (Mytilus)
- Oyster (Ostreae)
- Little Neck Clam (Protothaca)
- Butter Clam (Saxidomus)
- Razor Clam (Siliqua patula)

Large array of large and small birds yet to be identified

- Turtle

CONCLUSIONS

Based on work conducted to date, a number of trends are apparent:

• The frequency of domestic and wild taxa differs between features.
• Body part representation and associated economic values for body part differ between features but all contain a high percentage of low valued meat cuts.
• A large proportion of the assemblage exhibits informal butchery.
• Age range of slaughtered vertebrates

Overall, the low degree of standardization in butchery marks, variation of age of slaughter, and body part representation suggesting whole or large portions of animals being procured, suggests the households that occupied the historical neighborhoods were engaging in a market system more similar to those found in a rural environment. The inclusion of non-domesticated animals, represented by various wild birds, fish, rabbit, and turtle, suggests that at least some of the households were engaging in hunting and fishing. The reason for the use of non-domesticated animals is not clear at present.

DISCUSSION

Although work is incomplete, when comparing the faunal data with the artifacts it appears the people of Vancouver had access to, and were consuming, many of the contemporary styles of glass, ceramics, and clothing, as well as consuming packaged goods on par with contemporary national trends (Roulette et al. in press), yet their bone remains suggest they were processing and eating their meat in a more rural pattern.

The goal of this study is to better understand local consumption of animals, and to determine how faunal remains can be indicators of socioeconomics, consumer choice, and how they can provide clues of increasing urbanization and formalization of the market system.

REFERENCES

Zeder (1988)

Rothschild (1989) proposed that the inclusion of non-domesticated animals in the diet will occur primarily in the upper and lower classes. In the upper classes this will be a result of recreational hunting and fishing, as a form of entertainment, as well as a means to display their wealth. In the lower classes the inclusion of wild animals will illustrate provisioning out of necessity. It is thought that the middle class tended to sacrifice free time for work and was more reliant on the formalized market system.