

Diet, population size and the spread of modern humans into Europe

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Stable isotope data published this week in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* by Erik Trinkaus, professor of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, and Michael Richards of the University of British Columbia and the Max Planck Institute, suggests that at least some of the European early modern humans consistently consumed fish, supplementing their diet of terrestrial animals.

Accumulating carbon and nitrogen stable isotope data from fossil humans in Europe is pointing towards a significant shift in the range of animal resources exploited with the spread of modern humans into Europe 40,000 years ago.

Both the preceding [Neandertals](#) and the incoming modern humans regularly and successfully hunted large game such as deer, cattle and horses, as well as occasionally killing larger or more dangerous animals. There is little evidence for the regular eating of fish by the Neandertals.

However, the stable isotope data published this week in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) by Erik Trinkaus, professor of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, and Michael Richards of the University of British Columbia and the Max Planck Institute, suggests that at least some of the European early [modern humans](#) consistently consumed fish, supplementing their diet of terrestrial animals.

It is likely that this greater emphasis on small, harder to obtain, sources of protein reflects growing human populations in Europe and the pressure they placed on their environments.

Source: Washington University in St. Louis ([news](#) : [web](#))

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