

Anthropologist pushes back date of first humans hunting for meat to two million years ago

September 26 2012, by Bob Yirka

(Phys.org)—Henry Bunn, anthropologist from Wisconsin University, speaking at the annual European Society for the study of Human Evolution meeting in Bordeaux this year, has suggested that the date that humans began hunting down large prey for food needs to be pushed back over a million and a half years after studying evidence of carcasses of antelopes, gazelles and wildebeest left behind by *Homo habilis* at a site in Tanzania. He said evidence there indicates that early man was hunting in an organized fashion some two million years ago.

Up till now, most in the field have agreed that the most recent evidence of early man hunting animals for meat to eat was at a site in Germany that showed horses being brought down with long spears, likely thrown from trees, approximately 400,000 years ago. They've also agreed that early man was almost certainly eating meat before this time, but only from [carcasses](#) left over from other hunters such as lions.

In this new study, Bunn said that in comparing the types of animals and their ages eaten by lions and other carnivores today with the types of meat that were being eaten by early man, it's clear that our descendants were not eating leftovers, but were instead going out and getting their own meat.

When leopards and lions hunt down and eat the larger species of antelope, for example, they tend to go for the young or old, as they are

generally easier to bring down. Evidence at the Tanzania site however shows that [early humans](#) were eating such animals that were in their prime. On the other hand, when the [big cats](#) go after the smaller species of antelope, they tend to capture those in their prime, while early man seemed to prefer the young and the old. These findings, Bunn said, show very clearly that the animals that early man was eating were not brought down by other animals but were killed by hunting them themselves.

The evidence brought forth by Bunn could mean the rewriting of some [human evolution](#) theories regarding how it was humans developed such complex brains, and why. Some have suggested it came about as a result of the evolution of social communities and the challenges it created, with early man eating a lot of vegetative material and the odd bit of meat that could be scavenged. If early man was hunting though, that would mean he was using his brain to development new ways to do it more efficiently, particularly if it was done in groups, which would seem the most likely scenario as it generally results in the most success.

More information:

via [Guardian](#)

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