

# Native populations survived the Younger Dryas by switching from big game to fishing

June 6 2023, by Justin Jackson

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Mead articulated burbot vertebrae. Credit: Ben Potter

Research led by the Department of Anthropology at the University of

Alaska in Fairbanks has delved into the freshwater fishing practices of ancient Native Americans. In the paper, "Freshwater and anadromous fishing in Ice Age Beringia," published in *Science Advances*, the anthropologists detail zooarchaeological and biomolecular analyses of fish remains from several archaeological sites in eastern Beringia, a region of western Alaska.

The team sifted through all known sites older than 7,000 years for reports of fish. Ten sites were identified, all from the middle Tanana basin, where the Tanana River runs through before connecting to the larger Yukon River. Eight sites had materials available for study, with seven dating from the Younger Dryas ~11,650 to 12,900 years old.

A total of 1,110 [fish specimens](#) were identified, all of them Actinopterygii ([ray-finned fishes](#)). Of these, 627 (56%) could be identified to a taxonomic level. Identified fish included salmon (34%), burbot (58%), whitefish (7%), and northern pike (

Citation: Native populations survived the Younger Dryas by switching from big game to fishing (2023, June 6) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-06-native-populations-survived-younger-dryas.html>

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