

Neanderthals' failure to make parkas may have sealed their demise

4 August 2016, by Bob Yirka



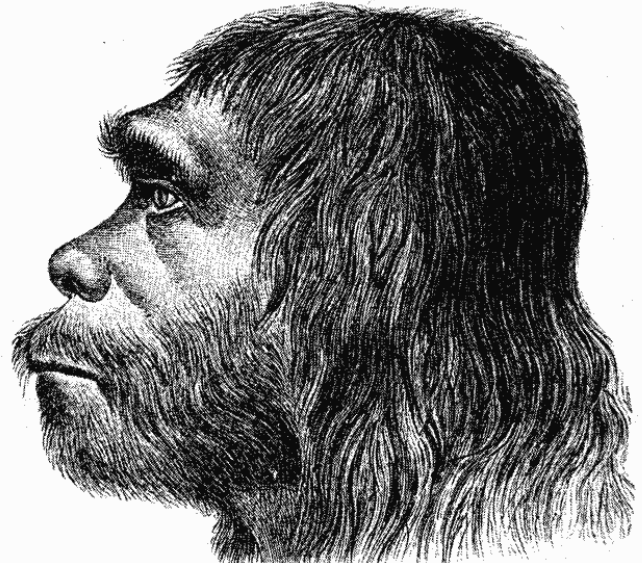
Comparison of Modern Human and Neanderthal skulls from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Credit: DrMikeBaxter/Wikipedia

(Phys.org)—A quartet of researchers at Simon Fraser University in Canada has found evidence that suggests that the reason early humans were able to survive the ice age while the Neanderthal perished is because humans figured out how to make parka-like clothing to keep warm and Neanderthals did not. In a paper published in *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, Mark Collard, Lia Tarle, Dennis Sandgathe and Alexander Allan describe their study of camp site evidence from both groups and offer some ideas on why just one group was able to survive.

As scientists continue to explore why humans managed to survive to the modern age while other hominids did not, new evidence has emerged that suggests at least one of them: Neanderthals might have perished because they were not able to sufficiently warm themselves using animal fur.

The study consisted of analyzing data describing campsites used by [early humans](#) and Neanderthals and then comparing the two to find similarities or differences. One major difference they noted was the lack of the type of animal

remains around Neanderthal sites that would have suggested they were used to make warm clothes. In sharp contrast, the researchers found multiple examples of animals such as fox, rabbit, or mink—and particularly Wolverine—remains around 56 early [human](#) campfires, all of which could have been skinned to allow for use in creating a fur coat or parka. The finding of Wolverine remains was of particular note because it is the same animal that people living in the Arctic in modern times turn to keep warm because it works so well as a liner and fringe around the hood.



Reconstruction of Neanderthal man. Credit: public domain

The researchers also note that other evidence of humans crafting warm clothes has been found as well, such as bone needles for sewing and other tools that could be used to scrape pelts. Also, a set of figurines wearing parka-like coats and dating back approximately 24,000 years was found in

Siberia. No such [evidence](#) of Neanderthals wearing crafted clothes has ever been found.

As to why the Neanderthals would not have crafted clothes to survive the cold, the researchers suggest they may have lacked the intelligence or simply because their cultural traditions were standing in the way.

More information: Faunal evidence for a difference in clothing use between Neanderthals and early modern humans in Europe, *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, In Press, [DOI: 10.1016/j.jaa.2016.07.010](#) , www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0278416516300757

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