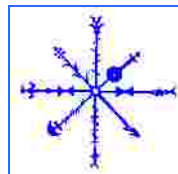


Preliminary Assessment Report
of an Archaeofauna from
Eyri, Isafjord,
NW Iceland

Yekaterina Krivogorskaya
Thomas H. McGovern

***CUNY Northern Science
and Education Center***



NORSEC

CUNY Doctoral Program in Anthropology
Brooklyn College Zooarchaeology Laboratory
Hunter College Bioarchaeology Laboratory

NORSEC Zooarchaeology Laboratory REPORT No.25

Summary

In 2004 a small archaeofauna was collected from a midd deposit in downtown Isafjord in NW Iceland. The species identified comprise the full range of domestic mammals (including a single pig bone), seal, whale, sea bird, and fish. The substantial amounts of domestic mammal bone, including new born sheep and cattle (usually indicating a dairy strategy) strongly suggest that this midden is associated with a farm and not a specialized fishing station. The collection shows variable bone preservation, but several contexts have good-to-excellent bone condition and the site appears very promising as a source of economic and environmental information.

Table 1 presents a summary of the archaeofauna as a whole. The NISP (number of identified specimens) is still too small for elaborate quantification, but the overall proportions suggest an active farm with a strong maritime orientation.

Table 1 Eyri 2004

	NISP	%
Domestic Mammals	130	48.33
Seals	4	1.49
Fox	2	0.74
Whale	1	0.37
Birds	2	0.74
Fish	123	45.72
Shellfish	7	2.60
total NISP	269	
Large terrestrial mammal	25	
Medium terrestrial mammal	94	
Small terrestrial mammal		
Unidentifiable mammal fragment	8	
Unidentifiable bone fragment		
total TNF	396	

Figure 1 graphs the relative percentages of major taxa of the archaeofauna as a whole.

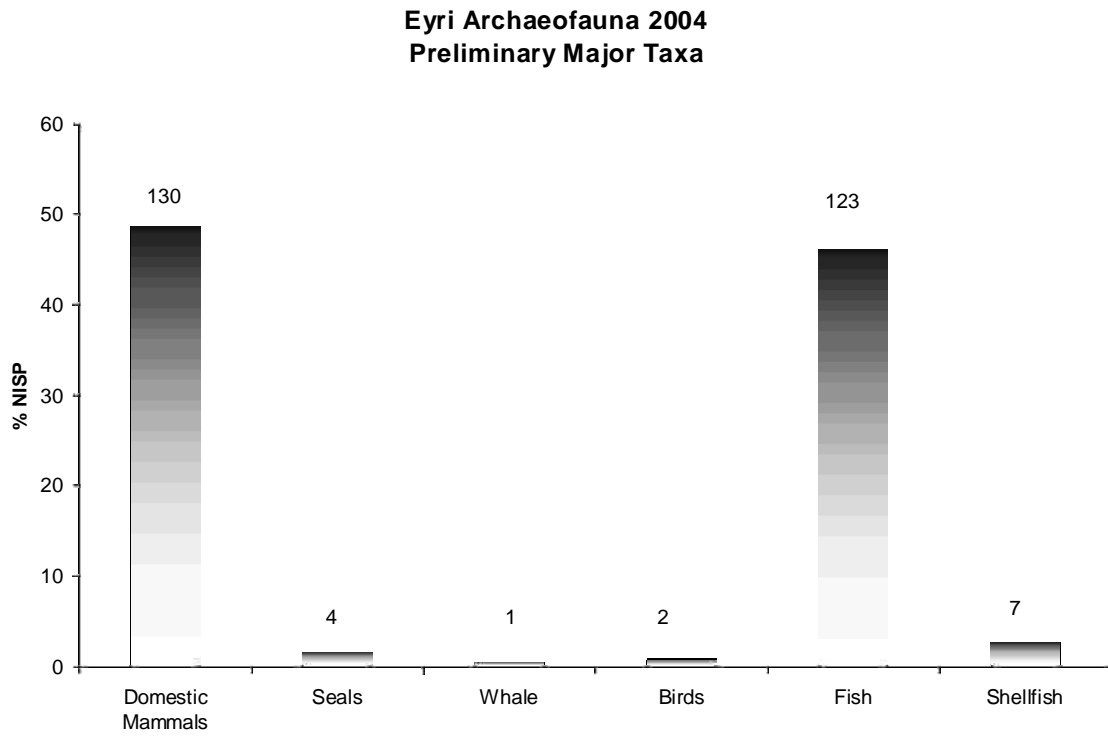


Table 2 Eyri 2004 total archaeofauna

<i>Scientific Names</i>	<i>English Common Names</i>	
Domestic Mammal		
Bos taurus	Cattle	29
Equus caballus	Horse	1
Canis familiaris	Dog	tooth marks
Sus scrofa	Pig	1
Capra hircus	Goat	1
Ovis aries	Sheep	22
Ovis or Capra sp.	Caprine	76
Wild Mammal		
Alopex lagopus	Arctic fox	2
Phocid sp.	Seal	4
L cetacea	Great whale	1
Birds		
Uria sp	Murre / Guillemot	2
Mollusca		
Mya sp.	Clam sp	5
Mytilus edulis	mussel	2
Fish		
Gadus morhua	Atlantic cod	36
Melannogr. aeglf.	Haddock	1
Molva molva	Ling	1
Gadidae sp.	cod family	3
Pisces sp indet	Fish sp	82

Table 2 provides a breakdown of major identified taxa by species.

Approximately 20% of the cattle bones come from very young (neonatal) animals, while neonatal bones make up just over 2% of caprine (sheep or goat) bones. As on most Icelandic farm sites, this pattern suggests cattle were being kept as part of a dairy herding strategy. The presence of a single goat and single pig bone is unusual in an early modern archaeofauna, but small sample size precludes much further discussion at this point. Dogs are represented by their tooth marks upon the bones of other species. There are about 3.4 sheep or goat (caprine) bones for each cattle bone, a fairly high ratio of cattle, which in a larger collection could be used to suggest relatively high status. Arctic fox bones are found on many Icelandic sites of all periods, and this collection includes the very worn tooth row of what must have been a very old fox. Seal bones are probably from the common or harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina* L.), but cannot be securely identified to species level. The fragment of whale bone is from a broken artifact (possibly a weaving sword) and may not represent a contribution to the household's diet. The sea bird bones come from either Murre or Guillemot

(the two species cannot be distinguished on most skeletal elements), which are found in many Icelandic archaeofauna of all periods. The identified fish are dominated by cod, with traces of haddock and ling.

Table 3 Taxon	Context													
	100	102	103	105	106	108	111	1017	1021	1022	1025	1026	1027	
Cattle	10	2	4	4		5						2	2	
Horse							1							
Dog tooth marks	xx	xx	xx				xx							
Pig				1										
Goat										1				
Sheep	7	3	1	5	3	1	1			1				
Caprine	23	5	4	6	3	17	8			3		5	2	
Arctic fox			1				1							
Seal	1				1	1					1			
Great whale							1							
Murre / Guillemot				1			1							
Clam sp	5													
Mussel									2					
Atlantic cod	1	2	1						19	13				
Haddock									1					
Ling	1													
cod family									3					
Fish sp				1					51	30				
Large terrestrial mammal	14	5	2	1			1			2				
Medium terrestrial mammal	31	3	11	9	1		13	2	9	13	2			
Small terrestrial mammal														
Unidentifiable mammal fragment														
Unidentifiable bone fragment	8													
total NISP	48	12	11	18	7	24	13	0	76	48	1	7	4	
total TNF	101	20	24	28	8	24	27	2	85	63	3	7	4	

Table 3 presents a breakdown of bone fragments by context and taxon. Note that dog tooth marks (xx) appear in four contexts. The single pig bone is a fragment of maxilla (upper jaw) and is not the sort of element usually associated with imported hams or pickled meat. As pigs become rare in Icelandic collections after ca. AD 1200 its presence in this collection is interesting.