

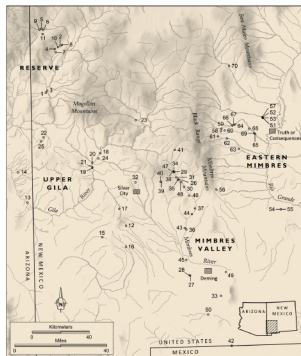
Animal Remains and Archaeological Context in the Reserve and Mimbres Mogollon Areas, AD 200-1450

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Can faunal remains identify communal spaces and ritual activity?

Ritual and communal spaces are often identified based on size, architecture, and specific sets of architectural features.

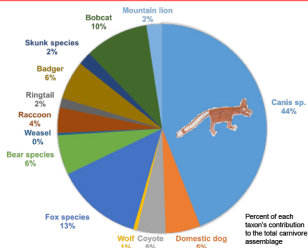
- Examine concentrations of remains of taxa not often used for subsistence or everyday utilitarian purposes
- Ritual and utilitarian activities are not mutually exclusive and the same taxa may be used for both (e.g., feasting)
- Data from 82 faunal assemblages, AD 200 – 1450



Archaeological sites contributing assemblages to this project. Map by Catherine Gilman, adapted from Schollmeyer 2016.

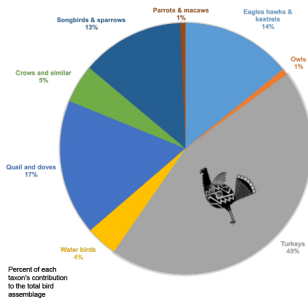
Carnivores

- Did not help identify formerly unrecognized ritual or communal spaces
- Often associated with known ritual or communal spaces (kivas, plazas)
- Canis sp.* and domestic dogs are most numerous (especially interments)
- Canis sp.* elements are also dispersed across some sites in various contexts
- Hough (LA 3279) great kiva has a large carnivore assemblage; other sites with >20 carnivore specimens don't show spatial patterning
- Context isn't always well reported, nor are interments or partial interments



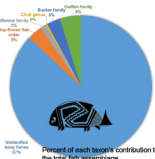
Birds

- Sometimes helped identify formerly unrecognized ritual or communal spaces
- Often associated with known ritual or communal spaces
- When quail and perching birds are common, they are widely distributed like food remains (NAN Ranch, Old Town, Luna); all other assemblages have <10 specimens
- Turkey are mostly interments (inflating counts here), but occasionally widely distributed elements (Wind Mountain, Matlocks, Gila Cliff Dwellings, Hough)
- Assemblages with unusually high numbers of other birds have likely unreported bird interments (especially raptors) with one individual reported as many elements
- Bird interments are found in known ritual and communal spaces but also "regular" habitation rooms and outdoor areas
- Reserve area kivas and likely ritual spaces often contain jays and other blue/black birds



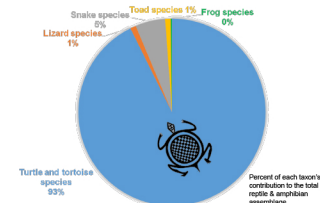
Fish

- Only four sites have more than 20 specimens
- All four are in the Upper Gila area (Woodrow, Fomholt, 3-Up, and Gila River Farm)
- Most fish remains are from spatially discrete deposits in habitation rooms (floor fill, floor pits) or sheet midden adjacent to a room block



Reptiles and amphibians

- Concentrations often associated with rooms with additional signs of ritual or communal function
- Most turtle specimens are carapace fragments, possibly rattles; this inflates reported counts
- Seven assemblages have >20 specimens; all are post-AD 1200 except Galaz (Late Pitohouse assemblage with probable single shell)



Identifying ritual activity and communal spaces

- Concentrations of these taxa are often associated with known important spaces (kivas, plazas)
- Concentrations also found in some unexpected contexts (habitation rooms, outdoor areas)
- Can strengthen otherwise tenuous interpretations of special use spaces (e.g., Luna Room 12)
- Can highlight special functions of otherwise "ordinary-looking" rooms
 - "Core rooms"
 - Other scales of ritual or communal activity
- Future research could examine faunal data from all known ritual and communal contexts (even with very few specimens) to assess how widespread these associations are

Potentially important taxa

References used to identify taxa likely used more often for ritual rather than other activities:

- Southwestern ethnographic studies, especially Puebloan ethnographies
- Iconographic studies, including painted pottery and kiva murals
- Previous archaeological studies of placement of animal remains in areas not primarily associated with household refuse (communal spaces, burials, caches)

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