University of Victoria Zooarchaeology Lab Comparative Collection

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Project Description:

Zooarchaeological comparative collections, like natural history collections, hold latent information, extend capacity as linked data scaffolds, and are fundamental, not only to archaeological research on human-animal relationships but, to biodiversity, conservation, and related contemporary and Indigenous management practices. Accessible digital information about specimens in these smaller, and usually regional, collections remain rare but can advance integrative synthetic research through links to taxonomic classifications, languages, as well as geospatial, biometric data, and 3D models and imagery. This project presents a framework for open comparative collection curation, enhanced zooarchaeological practices, and transdisciplinary collaboration by transforming the physical archive describing the comparative osteology specimens at the University of Victoria Zooarchaeology Lab into open "extended specimens" for 2,922 individual animals representing 671 distinct species. This diverse regional collection influentially informs zooarchaeological identifications for assemblages from sites across the North Pacific Coast and western North America. This research synthesizes information about the comparative collection including the development and application of data management, annotation, and publishing methods following FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reuseable) principles to facilitate broader collection discovery and use. To achieve this, open data standards are adopted to uncover, broaden, and add depth to each skeletal specimen and enable integrative biodiversity repository publishing. This process creates citable "extended specimens" and ensures comparability by standardizing vocabulary and terminology, and annotating with life history stages, collection locations, and specimen specific details. Additionally, a geocoding tool has been developed that connects Indigenous language areas and specimen collection locations. This work supports Indigenous data governance protocols following CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics) principles and engages with Indigenous data platforms to confront how colonial practices are reflected in the creation and uses of anthropological and archaeological knowledge. This augmented collection seeks to bridge relationships with Indigenous communities whose legacies of engagement with archaeology has shaped, and continues to shape and enrich, landscapes and seascapes in the past, present, and future. This contribution to open science seeks to respect Indigenous data sovereignty by considering FAIR and CARE principles to create a digital resource that connects audiences and enhances zooarchaeological research capacity.

Project Links

- https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/45BW9
- https://scientific-collections.gbif.org/collection/1cbebd16-1e98-417a-b1fe-531208312892
- https://doi.org/10.5886/jej09d
- https://www.gbif.org/dataset/5b11525e-c116-48a0-956f-4147ecd97237

DOIs

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