



Universität  
Basel

## Research Project

An Interdisciplinary study of the faunal remains from Abri Unterkobel (Oberriet SG) - Reconstruction of the prehistoric economy, faunal changes, environmental history and human impact within a rock-shelter site in Eastern Switzerland

### Third-party funded project

**Project title** An Interdisciplinary study of the faunal remains from Abri Unterkobel (Oberriet SG) - Reconstruction of the prehistoric economy, faunal changes, environmental history and human impact within a rock-shelter site in Eastern Switzerland

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**Organisation / Research unit**

Departement Umweltwissenschaften / Archäozoologie (Schibler)

**Department**

**Project start** 01.04.2015

**Probable end** 31.03.2018

**Status** Completed

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The project focuses on the analysis of the faunal remains from the rock-shelter site of Abri Unterkobel in Oberriet (SG). The site was excavated as a rescue dig between 2011 and 2012, yielding great quantities of archaeological material spanning from the Early Mesolithic to the Roman period. Due to the large number of faunal remains (large and small vertebrate bones plus molluscs) and their excellent preservation, this interdisciplinary study was conceived in order to take advantage of the enormous scientific potential of this material. The site of Abri Unterkobel is situated within the Alpine Rhine valley in eastern Switzerland. This area lies at the border of different geographic areas and forms a passage to important transalpine passes. The rich archaeological record of this area has only been partially studied and published, with the environmental history and archaeozoological record being particularly neglected. The study of the faunal remains from Abri Unterkobel will make it possible to fill an important research gap in the prehistoric archaeology of Switzerland. The aims of this research project are the reconstruction of the environmental history of the area around the rock-shelter together with the record of human-environment interactions throughout the prehistoric period. Furthermore, a detailed insight can be gained into the exploitation of animal resources within the prehistoric subsistence economy and the activities carried out within the site, as well as the function of the site within prehistoric economic networks. In addition to the archaeozoological research, the study of Abri Unterkobel will include the disciplines of archaeology, archaeobotany, archaeomalacology and geoarchaeology. This broad interdisciplinary approach will enable the site to serve as an important reference for further archaeozoological and environmental research. The basis of this study is formed by the significant assemblage of large mammal bones (totalling more than 18,000 fragments), as well as a number of sieved sediment samples that have yielded high frequencies of small vertebrate remains and molluscs. During the first phase of the project these three categories of faunal remains will be identified and quantified by specialists following approved analytical methods. The second phase will see all the results being analysed and discussed by the project participants and compared with published data from other sites. During the third phase, all the data will be synthesised using an interdisciplinary approach and integrated with the results from the archaeolog-

ical, archaeobotanical and geoarchaeological studies. This study is closely linked to a second research project concerning the stratigraphy, geoarchaeology, archaeology and archaeobotany of the site, which is being funded by the Canton of St. Gallen Lottery Fund. A close cooperation and exchange of results is scheduled for all phases of the project, and an interdisciplinary monograph about this important archaeological site will be published in 2018. The project focuses on the faunal remains from the rock-shelter site of Abri Unterkobel in Oberriet (SG). The site was excavated as a rescue dig between 2011 and 2012, yielding great quantities of archaeological material spanning from the Early Mesolithic to the Roman period. Due to the large number of faunal remains (large and small vertebrate bones plus molluscs) and their excellent preservation, this interdisciplinary study was conceived in order to take advantage of the enormous scientific potential of this material. The site of Abri Unterkobel is situated within the Alpine Rhine valley in eastern Switzerland. This area lies at the border of different geographic areas and forms a passage to important transalpine passes. The rich archaeological record of this area has only been partially studied and published, with the environmental history and archaeozoological record being particularly neglected. The study of the faunal remains from Abri Unterkobel will make it possible to fill an important research gap in the prehistoric archaeology of Switzerland. The aims of this research project are the reconstruction of the environmental history of the area around the rock-shelter together with the record of human-environment interactions throughout the prehistoric period. Furthermore, a detailed insight can be gained into the exploitation of animal resources within the prehistoric subsistence economy and the activities carried out within the site, as well as the function of the site within prehistoric economic networks. In addition to the archaeozoological research, the study of Abri Unterkobel will include the disciplines of archaeology, archaeobotany, archaeomalacology and geoarchaeology. The basis of this study is formed by the significant assemblage of large mammal bones (>18,000 fragments), as well as a number of sieved sediment samples that have yielded high frequencies of small vertebrate remains and molluscs.

**Keywords** Archaeozoology, rock-shelter, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, environment, palaeoeconomy

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