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# LATE QUATERNARY ARTHROPODS FROM THE COLORADO PLATEAU, ARIZONA AND UTAH

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ABSTRACT.—Late Quaternary-age arthropods were recovered from dry cave deposits and packrat middens located in the Grand Canyon, Canyonlands, and Glen Canyon region of the Colorado Plateau. This Quaternary data resource has not been analyzed before from the Colorado Plateau national parks. Radiocarbon dates on the various deposits containing arthropods range from 1510 to 30,660 yr B.P. The fossil assemblages yielded 57 identified taxa of insects, arachnids, and millipedes, including 15 taxa taken to the species level. The information from the fossil insect record of the Colorado Plateau is not yet sufficiently detailed to permit precise paleoenvironmental reconstructions. However, preliminary conclusions suggest a cooler, moister climatic regime during the late Wisconsin glacial and a mosaic of vegetation types, such as grassland and shrubby communities, unlike the present vegetation at the localities.

Key words: Quaternary, Colorado Plateau, arthropods, Wisconsin glacial, Grand Canyon, caves.

This paper discusses the results of a preliminary study of late Quaternary arthropod fossils from cave deposits and packrat middens from southern Utah and northern Arizona. This Quaternary data source has not been analyzed before from the Colorado Plateau, although the arid Southwest has been the focus of paleoenvironmental studies for approximately half a century (Antevs 1939). Arid climate, coupled with episodic fluctuating water tables, has proven detrimental to the preservation of most exposed fossil remains. However, the same xeric conditions, when coupled with a stable rock shelter, provide a unique situation—dry preservation. Such xeric locations provide the preservation of not only pollen and plant macrofossils, but also soft tissues and other usually degradable remains of animals (such as skin, hair, keratinous tissues, and dung; Wilson 1942). The study of packrat middens in the Southwest has provided a reconstruction of the Wisconsin glacial biological communities never before observable in such detail (see various chapters in Betancourt et al. 1990). Thus, an entirely new field of research has been opened, and it should prove valuable in understanding the latest Pleistocene.

Dry cave deposits were quickly discovered to be a warehouse of late Pleistocene information. Gypsum Cave (near Las Vegas, Nevada) and

Rampart Cave (western Grand Canyon, Arizona) were the scenes of the first paleoecological studies utilizing dry-preserved dung of an extinct animal. Laudermilk and Munz (1934, 1938) found a wealth of information preserved in the dung of extinct Shasta ground sloth (Nothrotheriops shastensis). Later studies concerned with dietary reconstructions expounded on the data available from dung of extinct herbivores, including Shasta ground sloth, mammoth (Mammuthus), Harrington's mountain goat (Oreamnos harringtoni), and bison (Bison), among others (Martin et al. 1961, Hansen 1980, Davis et al. 1984, Mead, O'Rourke, and Foppe 1986, Mead, Agenbroad et al. 1986, Mead et al. 1987, Mead and Agenbroad 1989).

Packrats (Neotoma; Rodentia; Cricetidae) build nests surrounded by construction materials collected from within 30 to 100 m of the house. The construction components are predominantly plant materials, but the packrat also collects small stones, skeletal remains, and dung. Adding to the materials procured by the packrat are various vertebrates and invertebrates who live in the nest and waste pile as commensals. Periodic house cleaning produces a waste pile of debris. Urination on the waste pile (a midden) ultimately may cement the remains into a rock-hard deposit, encapsulating

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Fig. 1. Map of the Colorado Plateau with sites discussed in text.

the contents of that time. When these indurated (cemented) middens are located in a dry alcove, rock shelter, or cave, the contents may be preserved for as long as the shelter exists. Radiocarbon dating of indurated midden layers provides a chronological framework for the associated plant and animal remains. Middens, then, provide a unique examination of local past biotic communities.

The investigation of insect fossils from ancient packrat middens and cave deposits is a new approach that is just beginning to show substantial results. One of the authors (SAE) recently performed more extensive research on a series of insect fossil assemblages from packrat middens in the Chihuahuan desert regions of western Texas and south central New Mexico (Elias 1987, Elias and Van Devender 1990, 198 Elias (1990) also recently published the res of a taphonomic study designed to reveal sources and possible biases of insect exoske tons in packrat middens.

# Methods

## Localities

Matrices from packrat middens and cave s iments were washed or hand picked for arth pod and other animal and plant rema Packrat midden and cave deposits from t cave sites were analyzed from Grand Cany National Park (GRCA), Coconino County, A zona; three packrat middens from Salt Cre Canyonlands National Park (CANY), San Ju 1992]

County, Utah; and three packrat middens and one cave deposit from the Escalante River region of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GLCA), Kane County, Utah (Fig. 1).

Bida Cave is a large limestone cave located in pinyon-juniper woodland at 1430 m elevation in GRCA. Cole (1990) reported on the packrat middens recovered from the cave. Test pit excavations produced a multitude of faunal and floral remains (Mead 1983, O'Rourke and Mead 1985, Mead, O'Rourke, and Foppe 1986, McVickar and Mead ms). Radiocarbon dates (spanning from 2960 to 24,190 yr B.P.) on various remains are presented in Mead (1983) and Mead, Martin et al. (1986); those ages from units containing arthropod remains are listed in Table 1.

Kaetan Cave is a medium-sized limestone cave at 1430 m elevation in GRCA. Mead (1983) excavated portions of the deposit in the entrance room for the remains of extinct mountain goat (*Oreannos harringtoni*) (O'Rourke and Mead 1985, Mead, O'Rourke, and Foppe 1986). Paleoenvironmental reconstruction based on the macrobotanical remains recovered from packrat middens and stratified sediments is in manuscript (McVickar and Mead). Radiocarbon ages span the period from 14,220 to 30,600 yr B.P. (Table 1).

Three packrat middens selected from a series collected from Salt Creek Canyon, CANY (1505 to 1755 m elevation), have radiocarbon ages spanning 3830 to 27,660 yr B.P.; today the region is pinyon-juniper woodland with sagebrush flats. The analysis of the macrobotanical remains and paleoenvironmental reconstructions of the middens is in manuscript (Mead and Agenbroad).

Bechan Cave contains copious remains of extinct herbivore dung (Davis et al. 1985, Mead, Agenbroad et al. 1986, Mead and Agenbroad 1989) recovered from floor sediments dating 11,600 to 13,505 yr B.P. Arthropods were recovered from the dung layer and from an isolated Holocene-age packrat midden in the cave (Table 1). Other nearby packrat middens contained additional arthropod remains dating from 1510 to 8640 yr B.P.

## Insects

Fossil insect sclerities were sorted from washed packrat middens and cave sediment matrices. Robust specimens were mounted on modified micropaleontological cards with gum TABLE 1. Late Quaternary deposits and radiocarbon dates from sites on the Colorado Plateau containing arthropods.

Locality	$^{14}C$ age	Lab number					
Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona							
Bida Cave							
Layer 2	$2960 \pm 200$	A-2836					
Layer 4	$16,150 \pm 600$	RL-1135					
Layer 5	none						
Layer 8	24,190 + 4300	A-2373					
	-2800						
Kaetan Cave							
Layer 1	$14,220 \pm 320$	A-2835					
Layer 3	$17,500 \pm 300$	A-2723					
Layer 5	none						
Layer 6	$30,600 \pm 1800$	A-2722					
Layer 8+	none						
Packrat midden 1b	$17,100 \pm 500$	A-2719					
Owl Roost							
R2	$21,430 \pm 1500$	A-3082					
2	none						
Canyonla	nds National Park	, Utah					
Salt Creek Canyon (r	ackrat middens)						

Dead Owl 1A	$3830 \pm 70$	Beta-18267
Woodenshoe 1	$6980 \pm 120$	Beta-27214
Hoodoo 1	$27.660 \pm 340$	Beta-27213

#### Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Utah

Escalante River regi	ion (packrat middens)	)
Bechan Cave 3	$1510 \pm 60$	Beta-23706
Cow-Perfect 1	$1820 \pm 100$	Beta-23711
Bowns 1	$8640 \pm 140$	Beta-23704
Bechan Cave 15S	11,600-13,505	0

<sup>o</sup>A series of dates are analyzed on *Manimuthus* (mammoth) and cf. *Euceratherium* (shrub ox) dung (see Davis et al. 1985, Mead, Agenbroad et al. 1986, Mead and Agenbroad ms.).

tragacanth, a water-soluble glue. Fragile specimens and duplicates were stored in vials of alcohol. Fossils were identified chiefly through comparisons with modern identified specimens in the U.S. National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution), Washington, D.C. Some specimens were referred to taxonomic specialists, as noted in the acknowledgments. Modern ecological requirements and distributions for species identified in the fossil assemblages were compiled from the literature and from specimen labels in the U.S. National Museum. All speciments will be curated in the National Park Service Repository, Laboratory of Quaternary Paleontology, Quaternary Studies Program, Northern Arizona University.

## Results

The fossil assemblages yielded 57 identified taxa of insects, arachnids, and millipedes, including 15 taxa taken to the species level. Table 2 shows the taxa identified from the

		Bida	Cave		Kaetan Cave					
Taxon	$2^{a}$	4	5	8	$1^{\mathrm{b}}$	5	8	ORR2 <sup>c</sup>	$OR2^d$	1b <sup>e</sup>
Coleoptera										
CARABIDAE										
Calosoma cf. scrutator Fab.	1				_					_
Agonum (Rhadine) perlevis Csv.	2				_			_		_
Agonum (Rhadine) sp.		1	1					_		
SCARABAEIDAE										
Aphodius nr. ruficlarus Fall				1	_			_		_
Aphodius sp.	_			1		_	_	_	_	
Onthophagus sp.				1			_		_	
Serica sp.	1					1	_	2	1	_
Phyllophaga sp.			1		_	_		1	—	_
Diplotaxis sp.	1			_				1		_
Genus indeterminate	1					1		1		_
Silphidae										
Thanatophilus truncatus Say	1				_	_		_		
PTINIDAE										
Ptinis ap.							_	1		
Niptus cf. ventriculus LeC.				_	10	1		9		4
NITIDULIDAE										
Genus indeterminate			_			1	_			
DERMESTIDAE										
Genus indeterminate			1		1			1		
HISTERIDAE										
Genus indeterminate		1				_		_	_	_
ELATERIDAE										
Genus indeterminate		—	_		1	_	-			
TENEBRIONIDAE										
Eleodes cf. nigrina LeC.	—	_			1	_	_	4		
Eleodes spp.	1	1	1		1	4	2	4	1	1
Coniontis sp.	_		_		_	1				_
Meloidae										
Genus indeterminate				1						_
MELANDRYIDAE										
Anaspis rufa Say			_	1		_	_	_		
CHRYSOMELIDAE										
Lema trilinea White						1	—			_
Chaetocnema sp.	1	_	—		_	_			_	_
Genus indeterminate		_	—		1	_				
CLERIDAE										
Acanthoscelides sp.		_					—	1		
CURCULIONIDAE										
Sapotes sp.			1		—	—	—	-		_
<i>Ophryastes</i> sp.	_	2		1				_		_
Scyphophorus acupunctatus Gyll.	2	1	1	_	_			_		_
<i>Orimodema protracta</i> Horn	1				—			_		_
<i>Cleonidius trivittatus</i> or										
C. quadrilineatus	-	1	1		_	_		—	_	_
Apleurus angularis (LeC.)		1		_		_	—			_
Genus indeterminate		1	1	1	—	—	_			_
SCOLYTIDAE										
Genus indeterminate		-	_	1	—	—	—			_
NEUROPTERA										
MYRMELONTIDAE										
Genus indeterminate					1					_
HOMOPTERA										
CICADIDAE										
Genus indeterminate					1			_	-	-
Convision										
Genus indeterminate									1	

TABLE 2. Fossil arthropods identified from Bida and Kaetan caves, GRCA, Arizona, in minimum number of individuely per sample.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED.

Taxon	Bida Cave				Kaetan Cave						
	$2^{a}$	4	5	8	$1^{\mathrm{b}}$	5	8	ORR2 <sup>c</sup>	$OR2^d$	$1b^{e}$	
Orthoptera											
ACRIDIDAE											
Genus indeterminate	—	1									
LEPIDOPTERA											
Genus indeterminate			_	1							
HYMENOPTERA											
APOIDEA											
Genus indeterminate		_			1						
DIPTERA											
Genus indeterminate	2		2						_	8	
ARACHNIDA											
ACARI											
IXODIDAE											
Dermacentor andersoni Stiles		2			1						
Dermacentor sp.	_			_			-		1	_	
SCORPIONIDA											
BUTHIDAE											
Centuroides sp.				1							
DIPLOPODA											
Genus indeterminate		1	1								

Numbers refer to layer numbers at Bida Cave. <sup>b</sup>Numbers refer to layer numbers at Kaetan Cave.

Owl Boost B2

<sup>d</sup>Owl Roost 2

Packrat midden 1b.

Grand Canyon region, and Table 3 lists taxa identified from Glen Canyon. The assemblages are dominated by taxa still found today in the American Southwest, but many of the Pleistocene assemblages contain species that live today at elevations higher than the fossil localities. As in other packrat midden and cave assemblages from the American Southwest, the fossil faunas are dominated by a few families of insects and arachnids. The beetle (Coleoptera) families Carabidae (ground beetles), Curculionidae (weevils), Ptinidae (spider beetles), Scarabaeidae (dung beetles and chafers), and Tenebrionidae (darkling beetles) were represented in most assemblages. A few packrat and other mammalian parasites were found, including a tick (Ixodidae) and a blood-sucking bug (Reduviidae) that are known to parasitize packrats in their nests. A number of the identified species merit individual discussion.

# **Discussion of Selected Species**

The ground beetles from the fossil assemblages include both cave dwellers and openground species. The caterpillar hunter, Calosoma scrutator, was found in a late Holocene assemblage from the Grand Canyon (Table 2). This beetle is widespread in the United States, southern Canada, and northern Mexico (Gidaspow 1959). It has been collected from the floor of Havasu Canyon, GRCA (Elias, unpublished data). The cave beetle, Agonum perlevis (Fig. 2A), preys on other arthropods. It is relatively common in caves and near the mouths of mammal burrows. It is found today from the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, northwest to southern Arizona (Barr 1982). This species, found in late Holocene assemblages in both the GLCA and GRCA regions, was identified from Holocene packrat middens from sites in the Chihuahuan desert region of Mexico (Elias and Van Devender, unpublished data). Another ground beetle from the late Holocene record at GLCA is Discoderus impotens, which lives in open country. It is common throughout the American Southwest and is found in the Chihuahuan, Sonoran, and Mojave deserts.

The checkered beetle (Cleridae), Cymatodera pallida (Fig. 2E), is a predator of bark beetles in coniferous forests in the Chiricahua, Rincon, and Huachuca mountains of Arizona, as well as in mountainous regions of Chihuahua, Mexico (Vaurie 1952). C. pallida was found in a late Pleistocene sample from the Grand Canyon.

The dung beetle (Scarabaeidae), Aphodius ruficlarus, was found in a late Pleistocene

	CANY <sup>a</sup>				GLCA <sup>b</sup>				
Taxon	DO1A <sup>c</sup>	WS1	HD1		BC3 <sup>d</sup>	C-P1	B1	BC15S	
Coleoptera									
CARABIDAE									
Agonum (Rhadine) perlevis Csy.					2			-	
Amara sp.		1							
Discoderus impotens LeC.					1				
Genus et sp. indeterminate		1			1			_	
SCARABAEIDAE									
Aphodius spp.								2	
Ataenius sp.								2	
Serica sp.					1			_	
Melolontha sp.					_			1	
Diplotaxis sp.					1			_	
Genus et sp. indeterminate		1			_			_	
PTINIDAE									
Niptus sp.	10		1		1		2		
Ptinus spp.					1			_	
ELATERIDAE									
Genus et sp. indeterminate		2				1		_	
BYRRHIDAE									
Genus et sp. indeterminate						1		_	
TENEBRIONIDAE									
Eleodes spp.			1		1				
Coniontis sp.					1				
Genus et sp. indeterminate	1							_	
DERMESTIDAE									
Genus et sp. indeterminate	1								
CHRYSOMELIDAE									
Altica sp.							1	- 1100	
Pachybrachis sp.		1						_	
Genus et sp. indeterminate		1						_	
CLERIDAE									
Cymatodera pallida Schffr.								1	
HOMOPTERA									
REDUVIDAE									
Triatoma sp.					1				
LEPIDOPTERA									
Genus et sp. indeterminate			1					- 1	
HYMENOPTERA									
FORMICIDAE									
Formica sp.	1							_	

TABLE 3. Fossil arthropods identified from the Canyonlands and Glen Canyon region, Utah, in minimum number individuals per sample.

"CANY = Canyonlands National Park.

<sup>h</sup>GLCA = Clen Canyon National Recreation Area. <sup>c</sup>Sites in Canyonlands are: DO1A, Dead Owl 1A; WS1, Woodenshoe 1; HD1, Hoodoo 1

Sites in Clen Canyon are: BC3, Bechan Cave 3; C-P1, Cow-Perfect 1; B1, Bowns 1; BC 15S, Bechan Cave 15S.

assemblage from GLCA. This beetle lives today throughout much of western North America from Saskatchewan in the north to New Mexico, Arizona, and California in the south. At the southern limit of its range, it lives in mountainous regions.

The carrion beetle (Silphidae), Thanatophilus truncatus (Fig. 2B), lives in the southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico in habitats spanning altitudinal gradients from grasslands and arid scrub desert through oak-pinyon-juniper woodlands, pine forests, and montane meadows

(Peck and Kaulbars 1987). T. truncatus found only in a late Holocene assemblage fi the Grand Canyon.

The spider beetle (Ptinidae), Niptus vent ulus, is a scavenger that ranges from Texas w ward to California and south through Mexic Guatemala. It probably breeds in rodent ne Modern specimens have been collected fi packrat nests and from the fur of kangaroo i *Dipodomys* spp. (Brown 1939, Papp 1962). 7 beetle species was common in several asso blages from GLCA.



Fig. 2. Scanning electron micrographs of fossil beetles from sites discussed in text: A, head capsule, pronotum, and elytra of *Agonum perlevis* from the Bowns packrat midden, Glen Canyon; B, pronotum of *Thanatophilus truncatus* from Bida Cave, Grand Canyon; C, pronotum of *Eleodes nigrina* from Kaetan Cave, Grand Canyon; D, exoskeleton of *Anaspis rufa* from Bida Cave, Grand Canyon; E, left elytron of *Cymatodera pallida* from Hoodoo packrat midden, Canyonlands. Scale bar equals 1 mm.

The darkling beetle (Tenebrionidae), *Eleodes nigrina* (Fig. 2C), was found in a late Pleistocene assemblage from the GLCA. This scavenger is known today from the Pacific Northwest south to the mountains of Arizona. It is a cold-hardy species, found at elevations up to 3050 m in the Colorado Rockies (Blaisdell 1909).

The false darkling beetle (Melandryidae), Anaspis rufa (Fig. 2D), is widespread today. Beetles in this family are found under bark, in fungi, and in decaying logs (Liljeblad 1945).

The leaf beetle (Chrysomelidae), Lema trilinea, feeds on Datura (jimson weed) and other plants in the southern half of the United States. It was identified from a late Pleistocene assemblage in the GRCA. Other plant-feeding beetles identified from the fossil assemblages include the weevils (Curculionidae) Scyphophorus acupunctatus, Orimodema protracta, Apleurus angularis, and Cleonidius trivattatus or C. quadrilineatus, all from the Grand Canyon assemblage. Of these, O. protracta was found only in the late Holocene, A. angularis and C. trivittatus or C. quadrilineatus were found only in the late Pleistocene, and S. acupunctatus was identified from both periods. O. protracta lives at elevations from 2250 to 2700 m in the mountains of Arizona. It is a soil dweller that feeds on roots (R. S. Anderson, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, written communication, July 1990). A. angularis, C. trivittatus, and C. quadrilineatus are all widespread today throughout western North America, while S. acupunctatus has been collected from Arizona and Mexico, where it feeds on Agave, Dasylirion (sotol), and Lophophora (peyote) (R. S. Anderson, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, written communication, July 1990).

Finally, the tick (Ixodidae), *Dermacentor andersoni*, is found today in the western United States as far east as Montana. Immature *D. andersoni* parasitize small mammals, while the adult stage parasitizes large mammals. This tick is a vector for Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Colorado tick fever (J. Keirans, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, written communication, June 1990).

# PALEOENVIRONMENTAL INTERPRETATIONS

The information from the fossil insect record of the Colorado Plateau region is not yet sufficiently detailed to allow precise paleoenvironmental reconstructions. However, for both the Grand Canyon and Glen Canyon regions, the available insect data suggest a cooler, moister climatic regime during the late Pleistocene. Montaneadapted species lived at lower elevations. The insects document the presence of conifers at the sites but also suggest that a mosaic of vegetation types was locally represented, including grassland and shrubby terrain. The shift to postglacial climates occurred sometime after 14,000 yr B.P., and the most arid conditions appear to have developed within the last 1500 years. Additional studies of regional insect assemblages will undoubtedly clarify the nature and timing of environmental changes.

Although preliminary and incomplete in nature, the arthropod data presented here are in agreement with the detailed plant reconstruction provided by the macrobotanical remains from the packrat middens. Cole (1990) concludes that a comparison of modern and full-glacial assemblages from the eastern GRCA packrat middens demonstrates that individual plant taxa and comparable communities shifted upward approximately 800 m at the close of the Wisconsin glacial (ca 11,000 yr B.P.). Cole (1990) concludes that the climate at the elevations of Bida and Kaetan caves was more continental during the late glacial. This result is in contradiction to the equable climates that may have occurred in western and lower-elevation regions of the GRCA and to the south of the Colorado Plateau (Mead and Phillips 1981, VanDevender 1990). Our arthropod data presented here do little to clarify the continental vs. equable climatic reconstruction contradiction. Our "cooler, moister climatic regime" reconstruction could be interpreted as a continental climate; however, it could also represent a regime with slightly cooler winters and cool summers, and therefore more available moisture.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The scarab beetle, Aphodius ruficlarus, identified by Robert Gordon, U.S. Departm of Agriculture and U.S. National Museu Washington, D.C. The weevils, Scyphopho acupunctatus, Orimodema protracta, Ci nidius trivittatus or C. quadrilineatus, a Apleurus angularis, were identified by Rob Anderson, National Museum of Natural S ence, Ottawa. The tick, Dermacentor anderse was identified by James Keirans, National In tutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland. We app ciate the help of Emilee Mead, Paul Mar Bob Euler, and Bill Peachy. Scanning elect micrographs of insect fossils were taken with assistance of James Nishi and Paul Carrara, U Geological Survey, Denver. Emilee Me drafted the figures. Financial support for study was provided by National Science Fo dation grants EAR 8708287 and 8845217 Mead and Agenbroad, and National Park S vice contract CX-1200-4-A062 to Agenbro Thanks are also extended to the staff at Ra M. Bilby Research Center, Northern Arize University, for their support.

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