



English Colonists and Complex Foodways in a Northern 'New England' Frontier



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The Great Bay Archaeological Survey (GBAS)



The Great Bay Estuary/P8bagok is a distinct estuary on the Atlantic Ocean. Abenaki/Pennacook peoples harvested and stewarded its high biodiversity for millennia. By the 17th century, the estuary was in New England's northern colonies, NH and ME, in Indigenous power-scapes, outside Puritan Boston, with New France accessible. Its ecology and frontier position make it an ideal place to study European global colonialism's shock. GBAS finds early colonial (ca. 1600–1750 AD) sites to that end.

The Burnham "garrison" site is on the Oyster River. GBAS's work complicates longstanding narratives of Native violence and English independence in the face of adversity. GBAS found 1) the site had no fortification; 2) a large Abenaki/Pennacook village site (1200-1680 AD) neighbors the site; 3) the house had numerous Indigenous artifacts and the 3-sisters; 4) fauna has 15+ species, many not domesticated English stock. We turn to this assemblage.



Interesting Finds



Teeth and distal extremities suggest on-site processing.

Many juvenile elements, especially sheep, raise the question: Do these young animals reflect food preference or a sign of food insecurity?



Did this unique frog/toad tibio-fibula get deposited naturally or was it intentionally consumed?

Personal items made of bone are common, including utensils, combs and finely carved fragments.



Flotation of the central hearth produced high quantities of fish and bird bone, showing these species are underrepresented. Finer samples may be informative about shifting foodways on this colonial frontier. Consider, the edible plants found in the hearth flotation were corn, bean and squash. The 3-sisters were grown at the neighboring Indigenous village.



Discussion and Future Directions

- Analysis is ongoing, but indicates a diverse diet, including use of the *awaasak* of this rich local ecosystem, suggesting dynamic interactions between these English colonists and their long-established Abenaki/Pennacook neighbors.
- Excavations have revealed multiple areas with concentrations of bone. Future analysis will compare these to see if distinct depositional patterns arise.
- Further research on personal items made of carved bone.
- Closer analysis of animal butchery and processing of bone to reveal more about foodways/preferences/needs.
- Cementum analysis on teeth to investigate seasonality and kill patterns, which will help address questions about food preference and/or food insecurity.

Burnham Site Faunal Assemblage Review

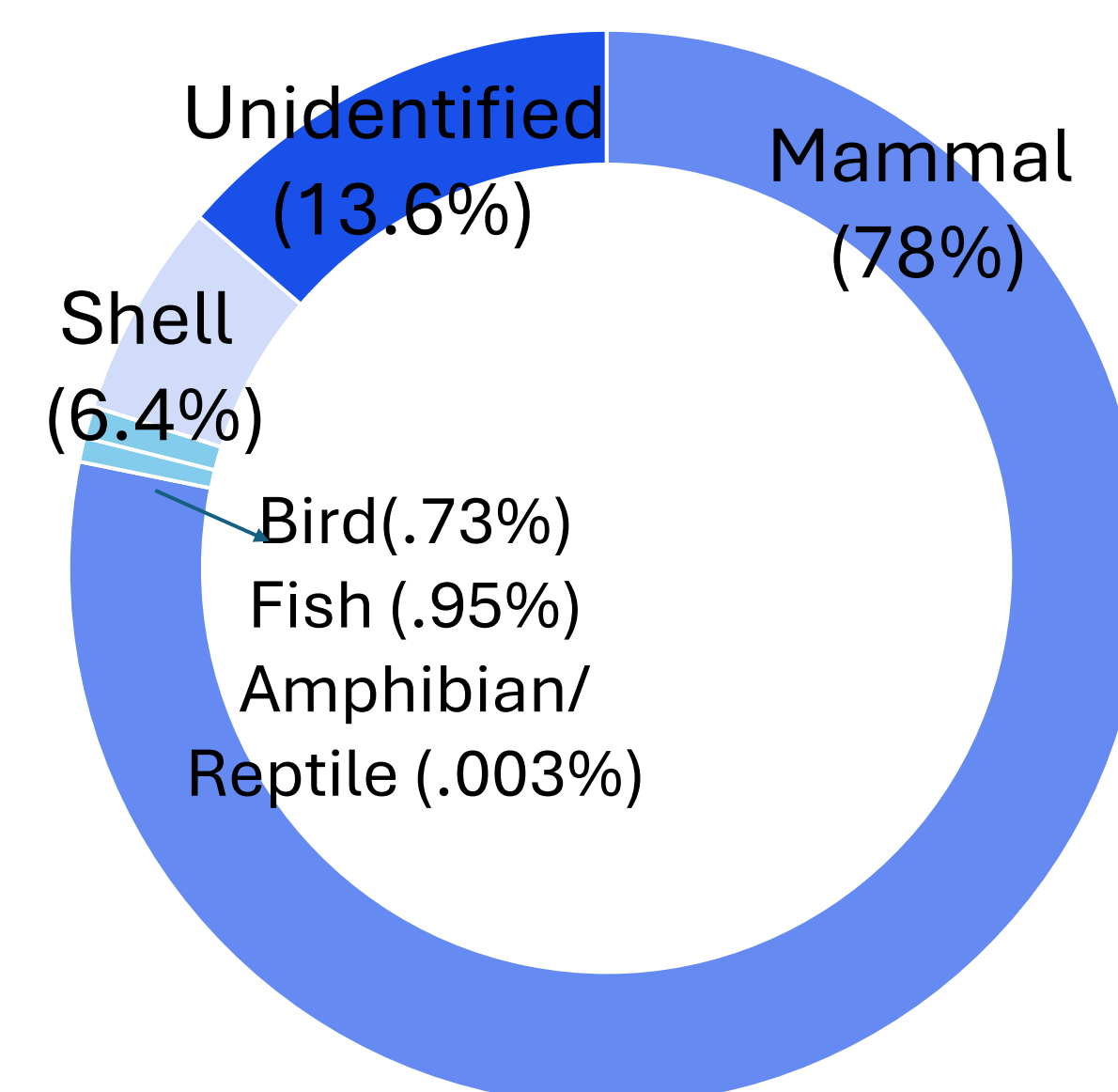
3,571

Number of faunal fragments (inclusive of bone, teeth, and shell) analyzed.

15+

Species are represented (analysis is ongoing). These include colonial-introduced domesticated stock animals such as cow, sheep, and pig.

However, there is also a notable number of wild species (or in Abenaki,) present, including moose, *deawaasaker*, rabbit, turkey, oyster, clam, and multiple fish species, important food resources harvested by Indigenous communities for millennia from the estuary.



Learn more at the
GBAS StoryMap:

