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Review

The behavioral ecology of modern hunter-gatherers, and human evolution

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Abstract

Modern day hunter-gatherers are an obvious source of information about human life in the past. But can modern people really tell us anything about other hominids, those represented only in the fossil record? In a world of state governments and a global economy, can present-day foragers even tell us much about life before agriculture? Some behavioral ecologists think so. Their findings show (1) that foraging practices are closely related to the character and distribution of local resources, (2) that men, women and children react to foraging opportunities quite differently, and (3) that sex and age difference in these reactions have important social causes and consequences. Some results directly challenge long-held views about hunter-gatherer economics and social organization, and the scenarios of human evolution based on them.



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