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The Approach of **Reconstructing the History of Endemic Animal Species** in Svalbard

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The Exceptional Landscapes of Svalbard

- Arctic archipelago discovered in 1596 and under Norwegian surveillance since 1925
- Area where a variety of natural resources promised financial gain
- Especially endemic marine and terrestrial mammals were heavily exploited

By now we know too little about the anthropogenic impact on the animal populations and the consequences for the environment

The History Archaeological Faunal Bone Scatters

Fig.1: Slaughter side at Kapp Lee, by Nienke Beintema

- Archaeofaunal remains offer the potential of unravelling questions in historical ecology
- Reveals triggers for social structures, commercial revenue, economies, diet, distributional and demographic changes in non-human animal populations

Human interference affected animals immensely, leading to changes and fluctuations in the polar ecosystems

"At Cape Lee, there are traces of many kinds of activities over several centuries [...] parts of the beach surface are "covered" by sun-bleached bones, mainly of walrus, which are open and exposed on the [...] surface" (R. Jørgensen, 2017).

Sysselmannen archive (1955-2016):

- Investigations on human-made structures and monuments
- on occasion recognition of animal remains
- No systematic taxonomic and anatomical identification
- displacement observed
- Language barrier

Database Askeladden:

- Focus on cultural heritage and artefacts
- A large amount of information was missing or deleted
- No systematic registration of faunal remains
- Language barrier

Museum collections:

- Information exchange challenging due to the pandemic
- Discard of archaeofaunal collections
- No comprehensive assessment and record
- No ethical guidelines for studying the archaeofaunal remains

TA2021 Expedition (August 8 – 28, 2021)

- Aboard on the MV Ulla Rinman, providing a mobile platform for a range of interdisciplinary sub-projects
- Aiming to advance the study of historical human-animal-interactions in Svalbard by:
  - primarily investigating known surface animal bone scatters
  - additionally exploring the archaeozoological potential of sites hitherto unvisited by any of the TA2021 team

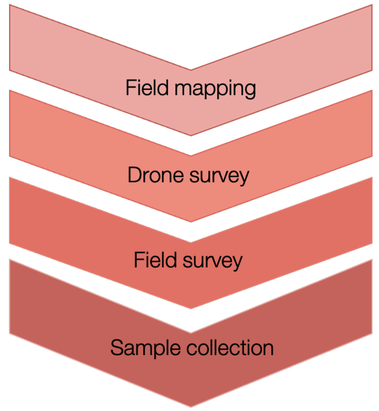

Fig. 4: Strategie for the archaeozoological sub-project

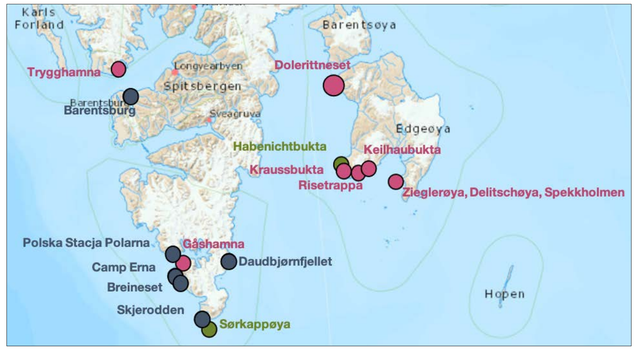

Fig.2: Map showing the landing sites during TA21 Expedition, Source: https://toposvalbard.npolar.no

Fig. 3: Assessment of bone scatter in Trygghamna, Sources: Frigga Kruse

Leading Questions?

- What evidence do surface animal bone scatters provide for past hunting activities and butchering practices?
- How can the archaeozoological potential of previously unvisited sites best be assessed?
- To what extent do bone scatters and other hunting-related evidence advance the study of human-animal-interactions and their impact?

Things to be consider

- Expedition postponement due to the pandemic
- Adaptation to the constraints of an Arctic expedition

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